

# CINEFANTASTIC

SUMMER BLOCKBUSTERS

July 1990

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**GREMLINS 2**  
Director Joe Dante on whipping up a new batch

**TOTAL RECALL**  
Schwarzenegger on Mars, budget shoots the moon

**THE EXORCIST III: LEGION**  
William Peter Blatty on his long-awaited follow-up

Volume 21 Number 1



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It's that time of year again! Summer film madness is about to descend upon us. Between the end of May and the end of August, compelled by greed, Hollywood throws more mega-budget productions at the popcorn crowd than most of us have time to see. While film execs sweat about the huge investments at stake, our only dilemma is deciding which films to sample first.

As usual, a big part of the summer boxoffice crush is horror, fantasy and science fiction. We've covered what look like the best and most promising in this special issue preview we've dubbed "Summer Blockbusters," giving special attention to ROBOCOP 2 and DICK TRACY, two of the summer's would-be hits that are eagerly anticipated.

New York writer Dan Persons visited the Houston location of ROBOCOP 2 to file his story on how director Irvin Kershner (THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK) plans to recapture the excitement of the Paul Verhoeven hit. Persons interviewed producer Jon Davison, who shepherded both films to the screen, returning star Peter Weller, as well as Kershner and his effects group (including designer Craig Davies and stop-motion expert Phil Tippett). Persons also looks at the troubled genesis of Batman *auteur* Frank Miller's script, and how RoboCop creators Ed Neumeier and Mike Miner got muscled out of writing the new sequel.

Hollywood correspondent Sheldon Teitelbaum tracked down DICK TRACY, or at least tried to. Tracy himself, interview-shy Warren Beatty, who also co-wrote, co-produced and directed the film, eluded the dragnet that nabbed producer Barrie Osborne, production designer Richard Sylbert, effects co-supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw and makeup masters John Caglione and Doug Drexler. There's also a look at comics creator Chester Gould and the Tracy strips, transferred to the screen on an unprecedented scale by the filmmakers in a project that is pegged to match the BATMAN boxoffice excitement of last year.

So pull up a chair, pass the popcorn and enjoy. If they're not hits, something else will be.

Frederick S. Clarke

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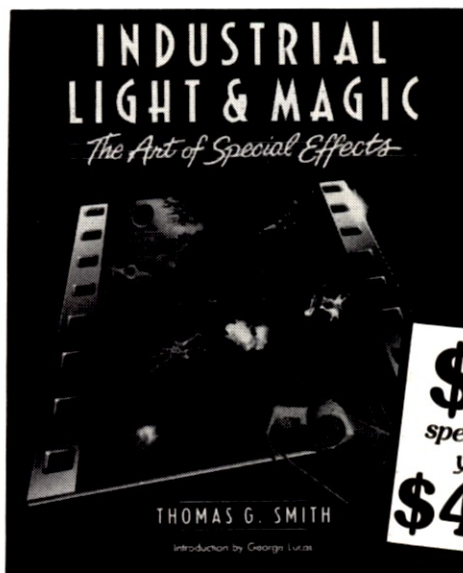
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# GREM

## Director Joe Dante on whipping up a new

By Bill Kelley

By the end of this summer, as *GREMLINS 2—THE NEW BATCH* concludes what everyone involved assumes will be a profitable theatrical run, nearly two years will have passed since director Joe Dante took on a movie that he originally had no intention of directing. But that was before Warner Bros had exhausted the talents of several other filmmakers and commissioned at least one indifferently received screenplay (*GREMLINS GO TO LAS VEGAS*), before turning to Dante for help.

Since directing the original *GREMLINS*, a 1984 release that unexpectedly became one of Warner Bros biggest hits of the '80s, spawning a rash of imitations with sound-alike titles (*CRITTERS*, *GHOULIES*, etc.), Dante had directed one modest hit (*INNER-*

Dante, with a Mogwai on the set.



Lee as Dr. Catheter, whose experimentation with the Mogwai takes an unexpected turn.

*SPACE*), one flop (*EXPLORERS*), and had briefly been part of the long line of directors courted for *BATMAN*. Dante came to *GREMLINS 2* with Warner Bros in a quandary over what approach to take with the film. Although shooting began in late Spring 1989, shortly after the release of Dante's *THE 'BURBS* (with Tom Hanks), Dante had actually agreed to take the project on before *THE 'BURBS* began filming.

"At that time, Warner only had the Las Vegas script, which everyone agreed was not the direction in which they wanted to go with the sequel," recalled Dante. "I agreed to come on if we could get a writer we liked to do a new script."

That writer was Charlie Haas, who set *GREMLINS 2* in New York City, where the title characters find themselves homeless after urban renewal razes the Chinatown neighborhood that houses Mr. Wing's curiosity shop. The Mogwai escape the wreckage unharmed, and Haas' script contrives to reunite them with Kate (Phoebe

Cates) and Billy (Zach Galligan), the teenage lovers from the first film. They all run afoul of Daniel Clamp, a real estate tycoon satirically modeled on Donald Trump (and played with unctuous charm by John Glover), and a mad geneticist, Dr. Catheter (Christopher Lee).

Most of *GREMLINS 2* was shot during the summer of 1989 on the lot of Warner's Burbank studios, under the title *MONOLITH*, a bogus title used to deflect media attention during the film's lengthy shoot.

For Dante, who said his films "aren't mainstream movies and I'm not a mainstream director," taking on *GREMLINS 2* meant reactivating a property that no one—certainly no studio executive—understood as well as the filmmaker himself. "I was pretty astonished at the success of the first *GREMLINS*—but nobody was more astonished than the studio," said Dante. "I think they figure if anyone knows what made it popular, I do."

*GREMLINS 2*, like its prede-

cessor, is produced under the aegis of Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment. Asked if a *Premiere* magazine figure of \$49 million accurately reflected the movie's budget, Dante laughed and said, "No, it's \$30 million. Actually, we were sitting around one day and we estimated that if you remade the first film—which cost \$11 million in 1984—today it'd cost \$25 million."

One difference between the two movies is that *GREMLINS 2*'s special effects are much slicker—and costlier. Rick Baker supervised the new movie's effects, which had been handled by Chris Walas on the original *GREMLINS*. (Asked the inevitable question—why technician-turned-director Walas wasn't approached to direct *GREMLINS 2*—Dante replied, "He was busy making *ARACHNOPHOBIA*," another Amblin project, for Walt Disney, directed by Amblin executive Frank Marshall.)

Baker was present on the set throughout the shooting, where actors unfamiliar with his reputation as a disciplined taskmaster—and perfectionist—soon discovered that it was not exaggerated. Lee, who said he was "really amazed, just fascinated" watching the effects crew at work, recalled a day last summer when he and the other actors were ready to shoot a new set-up, only to be delayed by Baker, as he made a last-minute adjustment to the Mogwai. When someone jokingly asked why Baker commanded such authority, Lee said Baker responded, "That's because the movie is called *GREMLINS*, not *ACTORS*."

Lee's role in the film is his first major American movie

# GREMLINS 2

## batch with horror star Christopher Lee.

since the actor and his wife, Gitte, moved back to London from their Los Angeles home in January, 1985. Lee was filming in Paris in May of last year, when Dante sent him a copy of the MONOLITH script and a letter offering Lee the role of Dr. Catheter. In the letter Dante professed to be a fan of the 68-year-old actor's work. Lee was in the midst of one of the most prolific periods of his career—nearly 12 films in less than two years—when Dante's letter reached him. After he read the script, Lee and Dante spoke by phone.

"Joe told me, 'It isn't the biggest part in the world, but I think we could have a lot of fun with it,'" Lee recalled. "In fact, I'm billed sixth, because you've got nearly the entire cast of the first film, and John Glover, who plays the villain, ahead of me. But I wanted to be in it."

Dante said he was "thrilled" when Lee accepted the part. For one thing, it gave the 43-year-old former critic for *Castle of Frankenstein* magazine a chance to work with one of his adolescent heroes. "It wasn't that big a part, but we found ways to make it bigger, expanding it as we went along," said Dante.

But when Lee arrived in Los Angeles early in July, his ideas for the character he would be playing were markedly different from Dante's. "He had grown a beard, and he showed up looking like Commander Whitehead of the old Schweppes commercials," recalled Dante. "He looked great, but that wasn't the way I saw the character."

"I had an idea that I'd play him as a sort of Einstein," said Lee, "and also, rather as a tribute to Boris [Karloff]. But Joe and the producer, Mike Finnell, said, 'No, we want you to

**"It cost \$30 million," said Dante. "Actually, we were sitting around one day and we estimated that if you remade the first film today—doing it the same—it'd cost \$25 million."**



Watch out for that blender!—Rick Baker's new look for good guy Mogwai, Gizmo.

play it as yourself, without heavy makeup." In the finished film, Dr. Catheter looks remarkably like the mad doctor played by Karloff in *BLACK FRIDAY* (1940).

The casting of Lee and such genre stalwarts as Kenneth Tobey and Dick Miller in *GREMLINS 2* indulges Dante's passion for hiring actors who starred in the films of his youth. Lee, who has worked for direc-

tors as dissimilar in approach as Billy Wilder, John Huston, and the low-budget Jess Franco, stressed that he never felt that his casting in the film was simply a novelty.

"I've never enjoyed making a film more," said Lee. "Dante always knew exactly what I was trying to achieve or suggest in a scene. I've often been in films where I truly felt I was alone, that I was the only one

who understood what I was trying to do. But Joe has an extraordinary knowledge and awareness about movies and actors, which put me completely at ease. And if a crew like, respect, and admire the director, they'll break their backs for him—and this crew really went all out for Joe."

Lee said his confidence in Dante and Baker helped when he was required to perform in scenes to which the Mogwai would be added later—and in one scene in which the Gremlins were very much a real presence.

"There's a scene in the lab at the end of the picture, where they gain total control," revealed Lee. "So you've got 20 or 30 Gremlins swarming all over me, each one operated off-camera by three or four people. It was very demanding technically. The Gremlins in this sequel are all very, very different—there are female ones, for example, that are voluptuous—much more so than in the first movie."

Dante indicated there are other differences besides the appearance and behavior of the Mogwai. "The trick is to make the best film you can with the material at hand," he said. "This movie is less structured, and more of a HELLZAPOPPIN' kind of thing, than the first *GREMLINS*. Even that film changed as it went along. It became a comedy as we shot it. What Steven [Spielberg] originally wanted to make was a B-horror movie, and he wanted to shoot it non-union in Utah."

"If you saw *GREMLINS*, it doesn't necessarily follow that you're going to know what to expect from *GREMLINS 2*. There's some William Castle-type things that we pull. You'll see . . ." □

# DARK ANGEL

**Muscleman Dolph Lundgren in stunt action as a cop after a drug dealer from outer space.**

By Rory Harper

DARK ANGEL is an action adventure with the accent on science fiction, starring Dolph Lundgren as a cop on the trail of alien drug dealers. The film wrapped its principal photography in Houston the last week of April 1989, two weeks over schedule and over budget by an undisclosed amount. Producer Jeff Young was unwilling to reveal the budget figures (the *Houston Chronicle* pegged it at \$8 million), and director Craig Baxley, who also directed ACTION JACKSON, didn't want to talk at all. Triumph Releasing, a division of Columbia Pictures, plans to open the Vision International Production nationwide August 3.

Several cast and crew members gave Baxley credit for maintaining an amiable work atmosphere despite setbacks and a grueling dusk-to-dawn night shooting schedule. "Usually, by now, everybody would be growling and snapping at each other," said one crew member. "But he's not a yeller. He stays calm even when everything is coming apart. That helps a lot." Perhaps helping former stuntman Baxley stay

Baxley, stuntman-turned-director.



**"I get to do more than just action, I get to act," said Lundgren. "I actually have some clever dialogue in this. My next movie is straight, no superheroes or aliens."**



Stunting the science fiction: the film's car chase through a shopping mall, shot on location in Houston last year by ACTION JACKSON director Craig Baxley.

relaxed was the fact that DARK ANGEL is a high-action, stunt-laden film, and the stunt coordinator was his father, Paul Baxley Jr., an experienced director himself.

From a cursory examination of the film's plot outline, however, it doesn't look like the script by David Koepp and John Kamps will hold too many surprises for an alert viewer. Stripped of upbeat assertions by cast and crew, DARK ANGEL has all the earmarks of a low-budget quickie. Lundgren plays Jack Caine, a maverick (tough-but-

sensitive, of course) narcotics cop who comes across a puzzling series of murders. Drugies are being killed and mutilated, but no money is taken from the scene, as it would be if they were being hijacked. Caine's ladyfriend, County Coroner Dr. Diane Pallone, played by Betsy Brantley of TOUR OF DUTY, puts him on the trail when she autopsies the bodies of the victims.

"What attracted me to DARK ANGEL," said Lundgren, "is that I get to do more than just action. There's some romance, some comedy, some drama. I

actually have some clever dialogue in this one. I get to act." Lundgren, whose RED SCORPION opened nationwide to lukewarm reviews during his last week of shooting in Houston, was obviously tired and seemed restless, ready to move on. Nevertheless, Lundgren remained professionally amiable when interviewed, admitting that he's pressing to get out of the Aryan superman action hero mold that threatens to put him in a corner. "My next movie is straight," he said. "No superheroes or aliens."

Lundgren claimed he was not distancing himself from RED SCORPION, which caught media flack for filming in South Africa, but said he wouldn't do public relations for it, "except in Japan, where I'm trying to get my connections stronger." In DARK ANGEL and THE PUNISHER, the New World comic book adaptation consigned to the shelf, Lundgren plays dark-haired Americans, and has lost 25 pounds since his debut as the Russian boxer in ROCKY IV.

"When we wrap here, I'll go back to New York for a couple of months, where I'm studying acting under Warren Robertson," said Lundgren. "All I want to do is keep making enough movies so that I get to work with good people... not that I haven't already." How much acting talent Lundgren has remains to be seen, but he's clearly extremely intelligent, and has already beaten the Arnold Schwarzenegger problem—though Swedish, he speaks accentless, vernacular



Jay Bilas as Azeck, an extraterrestrial cop who joins the hunt.

English with no effort.

As Caine, Lundgren gradually discovers that the perpetrator of the drug deaths is an alien drug dealer named Talec, played by Matthias Hues, a 6'5" German body-builder whose first movie role was as a lion tamer in *BIG TOP PEE WEE*. Talec has come to Earth for a drug only humans can supply. When injected with heroin, humans manufacture endorphins, the narcotic Talec steals from the bodies of his victims.

Caine is assigned to work with a straight-and-narrow FBI agent named Laurence Smith, played by Brian Benben, last seen in *CLEAN AND SOBER*. True to the film's buddy picture formula, opposites Caine and Smith gradually come to understand and respect each other. Galactic cop Azeck, played by Jay Bilas, tracks Talec to Earth, but gets killed, leaving it up to Caine and Smith to hunt down Talec. Along the way, Smith acquires an alien weapon that shoots explosive disks, wreaking havoc on the scenery.

The final confrontation occurs in a deserted cement fac-

tory, filmed near Houston's Ship Channel, with Caine pursuing Talec, who has kidnapped Dr. Pallone. Talec gets impaled on a rusty pipe and goes out with a bang, literally. His species doesn't just expire. They melt and explode when they die.

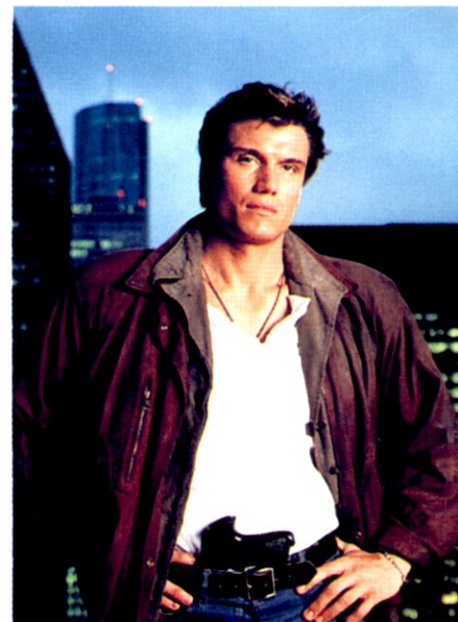
Bruno Van Zeebroeck, *DARK ANGEL*'s special effects chief, was easily the most direct, un-Hollywood-like personality encountered on the set. He gave Lundgren, who was a European and Australian karate champion in the early '80s, high marks for his

physical efforts. "He's not lazy," said Van Zeebroeck. "He likes to do his own stunts, and that makes the whole thing go easier, especially in special effects. Instead of having to shoot with tricky camera angles and stand-ins, we can go full-tilt."

Van Zeebroeck has a rich history in special effects, having worked in various capacities in television and on films including *DIE HARD*, *PREDATOR*, *DUNE*, and *RETURN OF THE JEDI*. *DARK ANGEL* is his first feature film as special effects supervisor. Van Zeebroeck said he has been pleased with the effects they have achieved. "We did a lot of spectacular pyrotechnics," he said. "This is going to be a good special effects movie. In the abandoned cement factory, we set off 14 fireball explosions in sequence. One mistake, and somebody would have fried. But we haven't had a single injury on this movie. I'm proud of that."

Another major effect was filmed when the crew blew up Houston's condemned Franklin Bank Building, doubling for the film's Federal Building. "My department would be exactly on budget except for that one," said Van Zeebroeck. Normally, a building scheduled for demolition would be stripped of reusable materials. For movie purposes, however, the building had to stay intact, at least on the outside. "When it came down," said Van Zeebroeck, "I got charged \$47,000 for the glass alone."

Van Zeebroeck's crew of eight was enthusiastic about working with him. "He's a good guy," one said, while Van



Lundgren as Caine, the maverick Houston detective trailing the alien drug lord known as the *DARK ANGEL*.

Zeebroeck was out of earshot. "He treats you right and he teaches you stuff. You're not just a flunky to him."

This was important to the crew, since half were Houston locals, aspiring to the big time while learning their craft in Houston's gradually growing film industry. *ROBOCOP 2* began shooting in Houston two months after *DARK ANGEL* wrapped. Young said that producing Hemdale's *COHEN AND TATE* in Houston is what brought him back for *DARK ANGEL*. "The city is incredibly cooperative, you can make a movie for much less here, and the technical help is thoroughly professional." There do seem to be limits, though. About half the crew of 160 were locals, but all the crew supervisors were imported from Los Angeles. □



Dispatching Matthias Hues as Talec, the film's alien drug dealer, impaled on a rusty pipe. Inset: Rigging the body, elevating Hues behind a false front.



# SCHWARZENEGGER TOTAL RECALL

**Arnold Schwarzenegger on Mars—it's a lot for summer movie audiences to swallow.**

*By Bill Florence*

"There are probably more special effects in TOTAL RECALL than in any movie in history, more than STAR WARS or anything else," claimed Ron Shusett, the film's creator/co-writer, and producer. "That's one of the reasons it cost so much money—that and the cost of sets, because we built a civilization on Mars. We didn't just go and find places that *looked* like Mars; we built them all, and it cost a fortune to build them on the sound stages and backlots."

Carolco Pictures, which bankrolled TOTAL RECALL, estimates the film to have cost between \$50 and \$60 million, though actual costs are said to be as high as \$73 million, making it one of the most expensive movie productions ever. Directed by Paul Verhoeven of ROBOCOP fame and starring boxoffice draw Arnold Schwarzenegger, the pricey picture bows nationwide June 15 from Tri-Star.

That's some 15 years after Shusett first conceived the idea for the film, based on Philip K. Dick's short story "I Can Remember It For You Wholesale." In the intervening years, as Shusett honed the screenplay, he watched a parade of potential backers, stars and directors come and go, until Schwarzenegger showed interest in the project and provided the boxoffice muscle to get it

**"Dino DeLaurentiis talked about using Schwarzenegger years ago and everybody said, 'Oh my God!' because they couldn't imagine how the script could be made to work."**



Schwarzenegger on Mars, menaced by a mutant after meeting the girl of his dreams (Rachel Ticotin). Schwarzenegger's casting changed the story's whole concept.

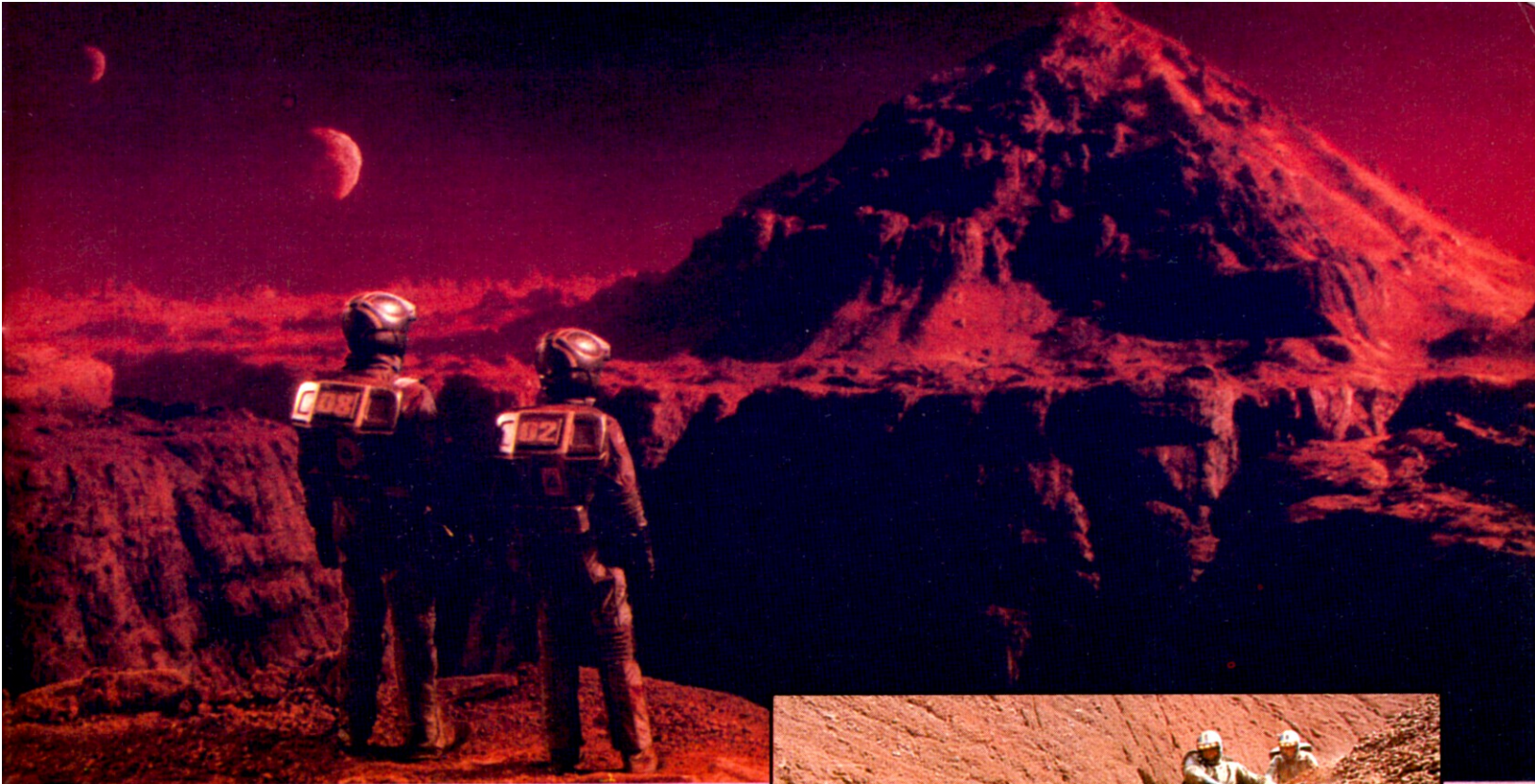
made.

Schwarzenegger plays Douglas Quaid, an earth man of the year 2075, who discovers he is not who he thinks he is, thanks to a visit to ReKall Incorporated, a travel service that turns your every fantasy into a mentally implanted dream reality. When Quaid becomes the target of Earth Intelligence Agents hell-bent on killing him because of his new self-awareness, a tip from an anonymous friend sends him to Mars, now colonized, to find his true identity.

For a role that was at earlier times to be played by the likes of Jeff Bridges, Richard Dreyfuss, and Patrick Swayze of DIRTY DANCING fame, Schwarzenegger hardly seemed a logical choice. Indeed, Schwarzenegger had been considered for the part of Quaid when financier Dino DeLaurentiis tried and failed to mount the production years before.

"Dino [DeLaurentiis] talked about having Arnold [Schwarzenegger] in this thing years ago," said production illustrator Ron Miller, who worked on the failed DeLaurentiis version in 1984. "Everybody was saying, 'Oh my God!' Because they couldn't imagine how the script could be adapted to make it work with him. In the original story, [Quaid] was a sort of milquetoast, a Walter Mitty type who wants to go to Mars desperately, and turns





The film's Martian landscapes, created on the stages of Mexico's Churubusco Studios. In an age when NASA has all but set foot on our planetary neighbor, will audiences accept an anachronistic red planet setting straight out of '50s B-films?

out to be a sort of James Bond type secret agent. But you just couldn't have Arnold Schwarzenegger do that kind of thing."

Pier Luigi Basile, who worked as production designer of the DeLaurentiis version before financial straits caused the producer to call the whole project off, was similarly surprised at the selection of Schwarzenegger to play Quaid. "I worked with Arnold on the two CO-NAN films," said the Paris-born designer. "When Dino said Arnold would be the actor, I thought, well, that's a very strange choice, because I couldn't see Arnold in the part at all. The script [we had] was

serious. I didn't think Arnold was a good enough actor for that. But maybe if they did an action film, Arnold may have worked. They probably have kept a certain amount of humor in it, because Arnold now likes to make some kind of humor. He's fun!"

With Schwarzenegger cast as Quaid, a key element of Shusett's script had to be modified, the DIE HARD element of surprise when the story's unassuming protagonist turns out to be a resourceful hero. "Arnold is just Arnold all the time," said Basile. "As the story was, we didn't know who or what [Quaid] is. It really



had to be a surprise every ten minutes of the film."

That element of surprise, according to Miller, was crucial to the script. "Once they get past the bit where [Quaid] realizes he's the secret agent-type hero, then Arnold can more or less play himself," said Miller. "It was the beginning part, when nobody knows what he is—he doesn't even know what he is—that made it difficult for a transition. Of course, nobody's going to be surprised if Arnold turns out to be a hero. That was the part they had to get past. Apparently, they have. I know that Ron [Shusett] is very happy and that Arnold did a marvelous job."

It is probably not just publicity hyperbole then, when the production notes for TOTAL RECALL term Schwarzenegger's Quaid "the most challenging role of his career." To

tailor Shusett's script to the actor, and to the demands of a new director—Verhoeven succeeded directors Richard Rush, David Cronenberg, Lewis Teague, and Bruce Beresford—Carolco brought in writer Gary Goldman (BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA). Working with Verhoeven, Goldman wrote new dialogue for Schwarzenegger and developed a new slant on Quaid, though the final shooting script is said to closely follow Shusett's original script, co-written with Steve Pressfield. The demands of adapting the project to Schwarzenegger's screen persona may have resulted in some truly amazing editorial convolutions if the description of TOTAL RECALL in the film's production notes proves accurate: "... an interstellar neo-Hitchcockian thriller [presenting] an exist-

continued on page 60

Schwarzenegger as Doug Quaid gets taken for a ride by a robot driver on Earth. In the original Philip K. Dick story, Quaid was a milquetoast Walter Mitty type.



# PEACEMAKER

Science fiction action video from the director of WITCHBOARD.

By N. Kourtney Kaye

Kevin Tenney's latest project, PEACEMAKER, promises to be an action/adventure film with elements of science fiction, humor and romance. "It's somewhere along the lines of STARMAN, THE TERMINATOR, and THE HIDDEN, only shot more in the style of a Friedkin police drama," said writer/director Tenney, whose earlier horror films have included WITCHBOARD and NIGHT OF THE DEMONS. "It's a step toward the kind of film I'd rather make. I've always been a big action/adventure fan."

Fries Entertainment plans to release PEACEMAKER on video June 20. The film involves two aliens who come to Earth—one, the titular policeman (Lance Edwards), the other a renegade (Robert Forster). Though the aliens appear humanoid, they are fairly indestructible. "Like a jellyfish or an octopus, they rejuvenate and come back for more—Wiley Coyote in human form," quipped Tenney. Caught between them is Dory (Hillary Shepard), a young doctor who first encounters the peacemaker when he is brought to the morgue by the police. The bullet-ridden peacemaker, believed dead, regenerates, and kidnaps Dory, to act as both hostage and guide. Eventually, the doctor becomes involved with both peacemaker and renegade, never knowing "which is the good guy and which is the bad guy," per Tenney.

"The challenge of the film was trying to get it to look like a \$20 million film when it's nowhere near a \$20 million film... and have a good story," said Tenney. Added producer Andy Lane, "This is what we do, this is what we get paid for—making a lot out of a little."

Tenney and Lane solicited the help



Director Kevin Tenney.

of makeup artist John Blake and stuntman B. J. Davis. "We've got a fractured leg with a bone sticking out, a hand dangling from handcuffs, a hand growing back out of a stump, and transformations culminating in a burn makeup," said Blake, who has worked with Tenney before. The burn makeup on Forster (ALLIGATOR) shows the results of

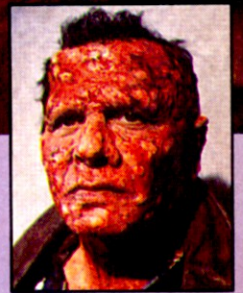
driving his truck into a dynamite shack that blows up.

It is the stuntwork by Davis which lead Forster and Edwards to the burns, bullet holes, cuts, scrapes, and gashes of Blake. "Every second page is stunts," said Davis, "two guys shooting each other, blowing each other up. Things that you've seen before in one way or another; however, we've tried to make it a little bit different, bigger and better, and more spectacular." An example is Forster's truck explosion, a pipe roll stunt which blows the vehicle out through the roof of the shack instead of having the vehicle just drive through.

Bullet-ridden "peacemaker" Lance Edwards kidnaps morgue doctor Hillary Shepard as his hostage/guide.



Robert Forster as the alien criminal who can't be destroyed by normal means, and in makeup (inset) by John Blake, showing the effects of a dynamite blast and fire.



Davis met Tenney through PEACEMAKER's production company, Crawford/Lane Productions, with whom he had worked in the past. According to Davis, he and Tenney "thought along the same creative lines," so he signed on as stunt coordinator. Of the several challenging stunt sequences, Davis found the ultimate challenge to be falling backward through a neon sign, on fire, and hitting a specific mark, a stunt which he performed himself.

"It was from four stories, which isn't that high, but when you fall backwards you go into your landing zone blind," said Davis. "Then you're on fire and you have to keep away from the flames because your Zel gel, which is a flame-protective gel, only lasts for so long before it begins to dry and you start to burn. You have to negotiate the neon sign as well and not get cut on the glass." Davis' stunts and Blake's makeup are combined with the special effects of John Eggert and John Carter.

Lane insisted the attention given the movie's stunts and special effects hasn't detracted from telling an interesting story. "This is a relationship picture," said Lane. "In a weird way it's a love triangle—the relationship between the two aliens and the girl. It's a seduction on both of their parts. If you take that and combine it with a lot of action and humor, it should be entertaining." □

# COMING

## CAPTAIN AMERICA

*Scriptwriter Stephen Tolkin on the liberties taken adapting the Marvel comic hero.*

By Bill Florence

21st Century Film Corporation's CAPTAIN AMERICA, tentatively scheduled for release last spring, is now set to open nationwide in August from Columbia Pictures. The film version of the Marvel comics superhero, produced by 21st Century topper Menahem Golan, is part of a new distribution agreement with Columbia that includes Golan's long-talked-about film version of Marvel's SPIDER-MAN. Marvel publisher Stan Lee served as the executive producer of CAPTAIN AMERICA, which was directed by Albert Pyun (THE SWORD AND THE SORCERER), and stars 6'4" Matt Salinger as the red, white, and blue clad hero.

The screenplay for CAPTAIN AMERICA was written by Stephen Tolkin, who got the job based on the merits of his MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE rewrite for Golan at the now defunct Cannon Films. "I'm no fan of superhero stories," said Tolkin. "In and of themselves they don't mean that much to me, although good things have been done in the form."

Since Captain America's first appearance in 1941 as a Marvel comic book, the character has resurfaced in various forms, including a 15-part movie serial in 1944, a syndicated cartoon series in the mid-'60s, and two made-for-TV features in 1979. But Tolkin said he never saw any of the earlier versions. "First of all, legally, I wouldn't have wanted to, because we didn't have the rights to those things," he said. "But even apart from that, I had my own ideas." Tolkin did read an early draft of the script by Lawrence J. Block, who shares "story by" credit on the film with Tolkin. "Basically, my script is the story of somebody from the 1940s coming to the '80s and relating to a change in values," he said.

Tolkin did, however, feel it necessary to review the original Captain America created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. "I read maybe five or six of the comic books all the way through," said

Tolkin. "I read the three or four that they happened to have at 21st Century, and then I wanted to get the origin story, so I went to a comic book store and bought a copy of that. That was it. The origin story hasn't changed."

But the rest of CAPTAIN AMERICA is Tolkin's own invention. The superhero's nemesis, The Red Skull, was created anew by Tolkin. All the character retains from its comic book incarnation is the name. Tolkin decided to drop the villain's monstrous look after the film's opening scenes. "I didn't think people wanted to keep looking at this horrible skull face forever," said Tolkin. "At the beginning, in the '40s, he has the horrible skull, but then in the '80s he has had plastic surgery. He's made himself presentable. He becomes an Italian industrialist, very rich."

Tolkin also dispensed with Captain America's colorful form-fitting costume for most of the picture. "You get tired of these things!" said Tolkin. "So I constructed a story where he's not wearing the uniform. [Salinger as] Steve Rogers is only in his uniform the very first time he's Captain



Captain America (Matt Salinger) rescues our kidnapped President (Ronny Cox). Columbia Pictures is now set to release the 21st Century Production in August.

America, and in the very last scene of the movie. All the rest of the time, he's wearing jeans and a shirt."

While most of Tolkin's prior work has consisted of rewriting existing scripts, he said he wasn't rewritten this time around. Tolkin made the changes necessary between his first draft and the final shooting script, mostly prompted by time and budget constraints. The most significant change involved a chase scene filmed in Yugoslavia as Rogers is pursued by Red Skull agents. Originally to have involved a pedal boat, a windsurfboard, and water skis,

Rogers' getaway was paired down considerably to the use of just a bicycle.

"I was sorry to see a couple of action sequences go, especially the water chase," said Tolkin. "Because of the unpredictability of the weather, it was not feasible. You need calm sunny skies the whole time you're shooting such a chase. It would have taken them weeks to film that. As it turned out, it rained the whole time they were in Yugoslavia. The whole European section of the film has this sort of gray feel to it. Which is good—at least it was consistent, it rained the entire time." □

## ARACHNOPHOBIA: BUG DIRECTING DEBUT

Producer Frank Marshall, one of the founding partners of Steven Spielberg's Amblin Productions, makes his film directing debut this summer with ARACHNOPHOBIA, a co-production between Amblin and Walt Disney's newly formed production arm, Hollywood Pictures. Disney opens the horror film July 20, against Fox's EXORCIST III: LEGION.

The script by Don Jakoby (BLUE THUNDER, LIFE-FORCE) depicts the mounting terror of a small town infested with a new breed of aggressive,



Frank Marshall

lethal, South American spiders. Jeff Daniels (THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO) plays the small town doctor who solves the mystery of the town's mounting death toll after the spiders take up residence in his own barn.

Julian Sands plays the entomologist who brings the menace to our shores, in the coffin of his dead colleague. And John Goodman plays the "Rambo" of exterminators, a small part beefed up for the actor after his success in Amblin's ALWAYS.

As a producer, Marshall has

overseen five of the 12 biggest money-making films of all time, including E.T., BACK TO THE FUTURE, and a trilogy of Indiana Jones films, all for Amblin, directing some of the second unit work on some of them. ARACHNOPHOBIA is being co-produced by fellow Amblin founding partner, Kathleen Kennedy, Marshall's wife.

Jakoby's script features plenty of low-angle, subjective camera-work of the poisonous spiders' eight-eyed, multiple screen point-of-view. The insects, which are horrifically rendered with up to two-inch bodies and eight-inch leg spans, are the work of a team headed by GREMLINS creator Chris Walas. □

# GHOST

*AIRPLANE's Jerry Zucker directs Patrick Swayze in a metaphysical comedy/drama.*

By Dan Scapperotti

According to its director, Jerry Zucker, *GHOST* is the first movie that takes the problem of being a ghost seriously. Not that it doesn't have a lot of laughs. Zucker, with brother David and close friend Jim Abrahams, co-directed *AIRPLANE* and *THE NAKED GUN*. On *GHOST*, Zucker makes his solo directing debut. Starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, and Whoopi Goldberg, Paramount opens the comedy/drama nationwide July 27.

*GHOST* is an original screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin, who wrote Douglas Trumbull's *BRAINSTORM* and whose highly regarded metaphysical horror *JACOB'S LADDER* (16:1:18) also is due for release in the Fall from Columbia, directed by Adrian Lyne (*FATAL ATTRACTION*). Swayze plays a man stabbed to death by a mugger in New York City who has trouble mastering the spirit world as he returns to aid former girlfriend Moore, helped by a wacky spiritualist played by Goldberg. Paramount offered the script to Zucker in 1988 after the release of *THE*



Jerry Zucker

*NAKED GUN*, and the director credited his wife Janet for persuading him to take it on.

"I didn't know Bruce [Rubin] before I read *GHOST*," said Zucker, "and the collaboration has turned into both a professional and personal one. We will be

collaborating on other movies in the future. Bruce was on the set for much of the shooting, and since I was directing alone, it was great to have someone to turn to and ask 'What do you think?'" Though Zucker acknowledged the support of his former co-directors, in the future he said he plans to continue to go it alone.

Budgeted at \$28 million, *GHOST* began shooting in July 1989 at the Paramount studios in Los Angeles, moving to New York City for five weeks work—mostly exteriors—filmed in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Soho, and Wall Street. The film features close to 100 special effects sequences supplied by three units including a group of effects animators headed by John Van Vliet, ILM, and Boss Film, the latter responsible for other-worldly sequences and a climactic heavenly light that beckons Swayze.



Patrick Swayze as ghost Sam Wheat, haunting girlfriend Molly (Demi Moore).

Bruce Nicholson headed the ILM effects group, which supplied shots of ghost activity like walking through walls and scenes when spirits jump into people's bodies. In one scene Swayze jumps from one moving subway train to another, accomplished by ILM in miniature. When Swayze puts his head through a door, ILM supplied his point-of-view shot of the door's molecules, as well as a point-of-view shot of another character who walks through Swayze.

Van Vliet's group was responsible for evil spirit effects, including a scene involving the demise of the film's villainous duo Carl and Willie, played by Tony Goldwyn and Rick Aviles. "Their bodies are taken away by these devilish characters who come to get their souls," said Zucker. "Van Vliet is also responsible for the God light at the beginning of the picture when Swayze dies. There is also one wonderful shot in the hospital where someone is on the operating table and their soul rises and goes to heaven."

Zucker said he and Rubin carefully worked out the film's metaphysical ground rules. "It was a tricky thing," said Zucker, "because we were dealing with a combination of fantasy and reality. We wanted to think of what might really happen if a ghost did stay on this plane. There is another ghost in a hospital. An old man who is waiting for his wife to die because he wants to go off with her. Swayze meets another ghost on the subway who is filled with anger. He stays in the same car where he was killed, and is very possessive of it. He is stuck here because he won't give up the physical, earthly things he's attached to. We kind of tried to explore the various possibilities. I say we because Bruce [Rubin] really was the author and

everything comes from him."

The first question the filmmakers grappled with was how can Swayze stand or sit down as a ghost if he passes through solid objects? "That's how Swayze sees himself," explained Zucker. "In fact he is not there. He is not viewable. He doesn't reflect light. Its another dimension, if you will. But in his own mind he still sees himself with arms and legs. When he sees a chair, in his mind he is sitting down, and that is what the camera sees. It sees Swayze as he sees himself. There is one shot where he sits on a couch and that was a problem because it shouldn't move from his weight. We were always running into problems like casting shadows and reflections in mirrors."

Zucker had seen Demi Moore in *THE SEVENTH SIGN* and knew she was right for the film. Swayze and Goldberg were another matter. Swayze's agent convinced Zucker to let Swayze read for the lead. "He was very good," said Zucker, who hadn't thought highly of *ROADHOUSE*. For the film's spiritualist Zucker wanted an unknown, not a personality like Goldberg, but a reading for the part by Goldberg convinced him otherwise. "She had the perfect balance for the character," said Zucker.

Despite its comedy trappings, *GHOST* has its serious moments. Zucker described the scene in which Swayze sees his own body and realizes he's dead as "very emotional." The problem with films of this type, noted Zucker, is how do you resolve a relationship that appears doomed from the start. "The film obviously can't have a happy ending," said Zucker. "It's like *CASABLANCA* where everything is satisfactory and both Swayze and Moore come to terms with the situation." □

## GHOST DAD HAUNTS FIRST

*GHOST DAD*, from Universal, a competing entry in the comic spook genre, opens nationwide on June 15, a month before *GHOST*. Termed a "comedy adventure," Bill Cosby stars as the titular dear departed dad, a workaholic executive widower with three adorable kids who kicks the bucket and finds he has only a few days to arrange for his children's financial security—as a ghost. The film, directed by Cosby's long-time friend, actor Sidney Poitier, was co-written by Phil Alden Robinson, the acclaimed director of last year's hit fantasy *FIELD OF DREAMS*, with Brent Maddock and S. S. Wilson, the creators of *SHORT CIRCUIT*. □



Bill Cosby as the spirit father in Universal's summer comedy.

# THE EXORCIST III

# LEGION

## William Peter Blatty on making his long-awaited follow-up.

By Steve Biodrowski

"Jesus asked the man his name, and he answered, 'Legion, for we are many.'"

—Mark 5:9

In the 1980's, there was a general trend in horror toward juvenile self-parody and gratuitous special effects which, despite some notable exceptions, limited the genre's appeal more than ever. The first year of the new decade, however, kicks off with two serious horror films from the men responsible for *THE EXORCIST* (1973), the most effective mainstream shocker of all time: director William Friedkin delivered *THE GUARDIAN* for Universal in April, and producer-writer William Peter Blatty takes up the directorial reins himself for *THE EXORCIST III: LEGION*, to be released July 13 by 20th Century-Fox.

Produced by Carter DeHaven, *EXORCIST III* stars George C. Scott, replacing the late Lee J. Cobb as Lt. William Kinderman. Jason Miller returns as Father Damien Karras, who died at the conclusion of the first film. Nicol Williamson and Brad Dourif appear as new characters: the former, an exorcist; the latter a serial killer whose *modus operandi* is being mysteriously recreated 15 years after his death. Principal photography commenced on location in Georgetown in May 1989 and wrapped with studio interiors two months later at the DEG Studios in Wilmington, North Carolina. Post-production in Hollywood included four weeks on the Fox lot earlier this year in March to film an effects-laden exorcism not contained in the Blatty book on which the film is based.

Given the tremendous success of the original Warner Bros film, a sequel was perhaps a commercial inevitability; however, at

the time Warner Bros elected to proceed, Blatty was more interested in grappling with a philosophical question raised by *THE EXORCIST*: how can man believe in a benevolent God when He allows such horrible evil to exist in the world? Blatty explored the theme in *THE NINTH CONFIGURATION*, re-written from an earlier Blatty novel entitled *Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane*, which he adapted into the excellent though little-seen film in 1980, starring Stacy Keach, Scott Wilson, and Jason Miller.

Warner Bros, meanwhile, released *THE EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC*, a baffling disaster from the otherwise talented John Boorman. "An amazing film," said Blatty, with subtle sarcasm. "I saw it with a paying audience in Washington, DC, where I was living at the time. I must say, I was the first to giggle, breaking the respectful silence, and that broke the dam for everyone else in the audience. We roared from that point on—you'd think we were watching *THE PRODUCERS*."

When Blatty finally came up with a credible idea for a sequel worthy of the original, he offered it to Friedkin, and the two joined with producer Jerry Weintraub to raise financing, until Friedkin backed out. After several other attempts to launch the project, first with Friedkin as director, then himself, Blatty adapted his screenplay into the novel *Legion* which became a bestseller in 1983. Finally, Blatty managed to interest Morgan Creek Productions in financing the film, which he re-adapted from the book. Various revisions and adjustments have occurred throughout the many versions, but according to Blatty it's still "the same story."

*Legion* is actually a sort of apologia, in the classical sense, for *THE EXORCIST*. The two volumes,



Novelist-turned-screenwriter/director William Peter Blatty, posed with the follow-up's Angel of Death

when combined with *THE NINTH CONFIGURATION*, form a trilogy. In the first, the question of why evil exists is raised. *THE NINTH CONFIGURATION* sidesteps the question by posing an alternative one: why allow the existence of evil to cause despair when there is so much evidence of the existence of good? *Legion*, on the other hand, takes the bull by the horns. "In *THE EXORCIST*, questions were raised regarding God's providence and goodness," said Blatty. "There weren't a lot of answers, you'll notice. In *Legion*, the novel, there is a presentation of a possible solution to the problem of evil, with which I can certainly find—if you grant my premises—no fault. It preserves the goodness of God while not denying evil."

Unfortunately, the complexity of the theory, which was presented mostly through Lt. Kinderman's interior monologues in the novel, proved difficult to translate to the screen. "Kinderman remains a character obsessed by the problem of evil," said Blatty, "but I simplified his problem, to 'Is there an afterlife, a spiritual world?' That he comes to believe by the time the film is over. Beyond that, I couldn't take it, because the film is an entertainment, a thriller."

Kinderman's search for a grisly serial killer, who carves the astrological sign for Gemini into his victims' hands, leads to a mental hospital, where he faces a peculiar dilemma: is someone, either doctor or patient, imitating the Gemini Killer, who died in a hail of police bullets 15 years ago at the precise moment Father Karras was taking his fateful plunge from Regan MacNeil's window; or has the soul of the Gemini Killer returned to Earth and actu-

George C. Scott as Lt. Kinderman, taking over the role played by the late Lee J. Cobb in the original.



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# THE AMITYVILLE CURSE

Denver-based First Films' horror, based on the Hans Holzer book, heads for video.

By Steven J. Lehti

Denver-based First Films, with three direct-to-video genre features under their belt, ostensibly shot *THE AMITYVILLE CURSE* as their first theatrical outing, though it is scheduled to hit video stores July 25 from Vidmark. Co-produced by Canada's Allegro Films, the \$3.5 million project was financed through a Canadian tax shelter limited partnership, by Cinegem Canada, the Canadian distributor, and through interim financing provided by a foreign distributor. Though First Films president Michael Krueger stressed that the film is not a sequel to any of the previous Amityville-themed horror films, both he and company press releases touted 1979's

Writer/producer Michael Krueger on the set with lead actress Kim Coates.



*THE AMITYVILLE HORROR* as the all-time, top-grossing independent film to justify producing the new feature.

*THE AMITYVILLE CURSE* takes its title from the Hans Holzer novel, on which it is loosely based. Holzer, a parapsychologist who wrote the original bestseller and served as a consultant on the first film, also wrote *Murder in Amityville*, on which *AMITYVILLE II: THE POSSESSION* (1982) and *AMITYVILLE 3-D* (1983) were based. Holzer attempted to get an injunction barring First Films from making their installment, but his suit was dismissed in Denver Federal Court.

"We bought the rights to his book," said Krueger. "Holzer had written a screenplay which we had the option to use. We elected not to use it—it wasn't up to par. Holzer wanted more money, and felt we were obligated to use his script." Krueger estimated that the film retains about 50% of the novel's material. Krueger co-authored the script with former Denver television news personality Norvell Rose, and Doug Olsen, owner of Denver's Comedy Works and a member of First Films' Board.

"We did retain central characters and key situations [from Holzer's book]," said Rose. "But it didn't suggest 'movie' to me personally. Or to the others, apparently. It's not about the house made famous by the other films. It's set in Amityville, but this is another house." Laughed Rose,



Effects assistant Ted A. Bohus as the film's rotting corpse in makeup by Pat Shearn and Ron Cole, filming added shock scenes with Quebec stunt double Alison Reid.

"Amityville must be the Bermuda Triangle for haunted houses!"

The film's story concerns a group of friends who assemble to renovate an old house, only to have the ghost of a murdered priest attempt to warn them that his murderer is still about. According to Rose, several potential distributors looked at the script and found it "too literate and thoughtful," and felt there wasn't enough gore. Some shocks and makeup effects were added to beef things up, largely contained in dream sequences, supervised by Ted Bohus, who worked on First Films' video features *MIND KILLER* and *LONE WOLF*. "We've tried to focus on character development and mood," Krueger emphasized. "Shocks are fine, but shocks don't make a film scary. We're not interested in making another *FRIDAY THE 13TH*."

Krueger originally planned to direct *THE AMITYVILLE*

*CURSE*, but when his company joined with the Canadian production company, a Canadian director was required. Tom Berry (*BLIND FEAR*, *SOMETHING ABOUT LOVE*) took the helm. Berry also joined with First Films' A. B. Goldberg in producing the film. Shooting took place in Montreal, in April 1989, on a brisk 26-day schedule. Krueger wouldn't comment on changes Berry made when he joined the production.

The film's Canadian cast includes a few recognized actors—something of a milestone for First Films, which had previously utilized local Denver talent in their direct-to-videos. Among them are Jann Rubes (Kelly McGillis' Amish father in *WITNESS*), playing the murdered priest, and Cassandra Gava, the unforgettably seductive witch in *CONAN THE BARBARIAN*, the only non-Canadian. □

## BOXOFFICE SURVEY: GENRE OPENS NEW DECADE WITH ROSY TOTALS

An analysis of the Top Grossing Films, as reported in *Variety's* "Weekend Boxoffice Report," reveals that in the first 13 weeks of 1990 revenue from horror, fantasy, and science fiction films totaled a healthy \$224,708,551, while film grosses in general reached \$715,597,249.

In the first quarter the genre's 31.4% share of total boxoffice is keeping pace with last year's impressive share (30.6%), which practically tripled the previous year's results. Fantasy and science fiction films are primarily responsible for the genre's success, earning \$110,165,149

and \$90,710,036 (respectively), while horror boxoffice continues to lag behind, earning only \$23,833,366.

Two of the genre's (and indeed, films in general) biggest successes—made more remarkable in that they were aimed at kids, whose tickets are priced considerably less than adults—were *THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES* (sf) and *THE LITTLE MERMAID* (f). Hopes for horror's much-needed resurrection were dashed when prolific author Clive Barker's *NIGHTBREED* failed to make a major breakthrough. (Story on

page 57.)

In the first quarter, science fiction films accounted for 7.69% of all films and 12.68% of receipts; fantasy films accounted for 8.46% of all films and 15.39% of receipts; while horror films accounted for 6.15% of all films and 3.3% of receipts.

Top grossing genre films in the *Variety* totals are listed at right (through 4/15). For purposes of breakdown by genre, titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f), and science fiction (sf) followed by the number of weeks each title made the "Weekend Boxoffice Report" since January.

### TOP GENRE FILMS OF '90

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER (sf, 7)	\$67,227,369
THE TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (sf, 3)	\$45,350,332
• THE LITTLE MERMAID (f, 16)	\$33,265,003
ALWAYS (f, 17)	\$27,128,199
JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO (f, 6)	\$27,128,199
BACK TO THE FUTURE PART 2 (sf, 11)	\$23,968,781
• LOOK WHO'S TALKING (f, 16)	\$20,740,709
ERNEST GOES TO JAIL (f, 2)	\$10,393,282
THE FIRST POWER (h, 2)	\$ 9,496,728
LORD OF THE FLIES (h, 5)	\$ 9,324,134
NIGHTBREED (h, 6)	\$ 7,180,401
BLUE STEEL (h, 5)	\$ 5,693,065
• ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN (f, 14)	\$ 5,587,949
HEART CONDITION (f, 6)	\$ 3,260,614

• Denotes reissues or films released prior to 1990 (totals do not include boxoffice figures from previous years).

# Lobster Man from Mars

**A monster film parody inspired by the late, great Orson Welles.**

*By Steve Biodrowski*

According to director Stanley J. Sheff, the inspiration for **LOBSTER MAN FROM MARS** came from the late, great Orson Welles. "He was always referring to his 'War of the Worlds' radio broadcast as 'that Lobster Man thing I did back in the '30s,'" said Sheff, who worked with Welles on an unsold TV variety pilot in the mid-'70s. Welles gave Sheff his blessing for use of the title which Sheff turned into a script in 1978, collaborating with Bob Greenberg, about a young filmmaker trying to get a Hollywood mogul to distribute his low-budget science fiction epic.

Some ten years later Sheff's notion for a film became a reality thanks to producer Electric Pictures. "I always say it took two weeks to write and ten years to polish," Sheff laughed. Tony Curtis plays Shell-drake, the Hollywood mogul, a role originally intended for Welles. The project, in the vein of parodies like John Landis' **AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON**, hits video stores July 26 from I.V.E. after brief theatrical exposure, just in time to cash-in on the Mars mania of Arnold Schwarzenegger's **TOTAL RECALL**.

Predictably, the project has suffered a couple of false starts in ten years time. Sheff originally envisioned it as a \$50,000, 16 mm super low-budgeter, but couldn't raise the money. The film nearly got off the ground in 1986 with SAG talent and in 35 mm on a budget of \$150,000, but was stymied by the untimely death of scripter Bob Greenberg in a car crash. Sheff credits co-producer Steven S. Green, then president of animation at Warner Bros, with putting together the deal to make the film at Electric Pictures, which budgeted the film at \$500,000 but eventually kicked in \$250,000 more to hire star names. Also in the cast are



Film mogul Tony Curtis, watching his genre turkey.

Billy Barty, "Monster Mash" singer Bobby "Boris" Pickett, and Dr. Demento, who provides the film's voice-over narration.

Electric's first feature was **WAXWORK** (19:1/2:102) and several of the members of its cast and crew were drafted to work on **LOBSTER MAN FROM MARS**, including cinematographer Gerry Lively and director Anthony Hickox (who had to settle for playing the male lead) as well as actors

Patrick Macnee and Deborah Foreman. The film shot for four weeks last summer "during the writer's strike, which allowed us to get great deals," said Sheff, who added that he had no problems as a fledgling director. "I had ten years to prepare, so I'd shot this film in my head a million times."

Sheff took his crew to several locations recognizable from their overuse in low-budget science fiction films, including Bronson Canyon. "We went to Tapi Park, which is where Roger Corman shot a lot of his movies," said Sheff. "It's great because you have forests on one side, a stream, a swampy area, and rugged mountains. So just by turning the camera we were able to get a totally different look." The choice of locations was an intentional homage to the sort of flicks Sheff enjoyed as a kid, and **LOBSTER MAN FROM MARS** is filled

"Monster Mash" singer Bobby "Boris" Pickett in his cameo as the King of Mars.



S. D. Nemeth as the Lobster Man, with his **ROBOT MONSTER** look-alike henchman Mambo, makeup by Brian Penikas inspired by crude B-films of the '50s.

with such inside references.

In keeping with the low-budget look and tone of the film, the special effects by Tony Doublin make no attempt to be convincing, but they are frequently amusing: a lobsterbat hanging on a wire, a spaceship with Piccolo Pete fireworks for an exhaust, and a house blown up not with the use of a miniature, but with a photograph. "We didn't want real good looking effects," said Sheff. "It's not my film anyway; it's Stevie Horowitz' movie," he said, referring to the fictional director of the film within the film.

After the shoot, Sheff rushed to put together a 95-minute cut for the U.S. Film Festival, editing on video equipment in his apartment. An 87-minute version followed, screened at the American Film Market. Sheff's final cut came in at 82 minutes.

"It's been sold for foreign distribution," said Sheff. "They have been offered video rights, and they're just waiting for the right domestic deal. They made their money back on the foreign deals—it went into profit before the final cut—so they can afford to wait for the best offer." □

# ROBOCOP 2™

## Producer Jon Davison puts Peter Weller back on the robotic beat in Old Detroit.

By Dan Persons

*"As We Build Our City, Let Us Think That We Are Building Forever."*

—Inscription, Houston City Hall

*"The Future Has a Silver Lining."*

—Delta City Ad Slogan

Houston wars with itself. Wander the streets, and the juxtaposition of the old with the new can be jarring. On one block may be City Hall, a traditional, ten-story structure in granite, fronted by a properly municipal reflecting pool. Cross the street, and you're in Tranquility Park, where the pool is skirted by a metal catwalk and water falls in sheets down the sides of tall, copper-colored columns. Sam Houston Park huddles deserted on the edge of town, its handful of reconstructed houses overshadowed by the steel-and-glass office towers that abruptly rise a few steps from its entrance. Even famed architect Philip Johnson seems at odds with himself: does he wish to be remembered for the International Style of his black-glass Pennzoil Place, or for the "Neo-Renaissance" spires and red stone facade of his neighboring NCNB Building?

It's a war that is being waged in every American city these days, the past struggling to maintain a foothold against the overwhelming, and often pointless, crush of new development. (It's an especially bitter battle for Houston: after several, very bad years for the oil industry, many of these looming glass towers are close to deserted). It seems more than a bit appropriate, then, that Orion Pictures and producer Jon Davison's Tobor Pictures have picked this city as the production base for **ROBOCOP 2**, which opens nationwide June 22. At its heart the film is a serio-comic depiction of what happens when property values and corporate



Peter Weller reprises his role as RoboCop, Detroit's crime-fighting cyborg, in makeup by Stephan Dupuis. The sequel is scheduled to open nationwide June 22.

gain supersede human needs.

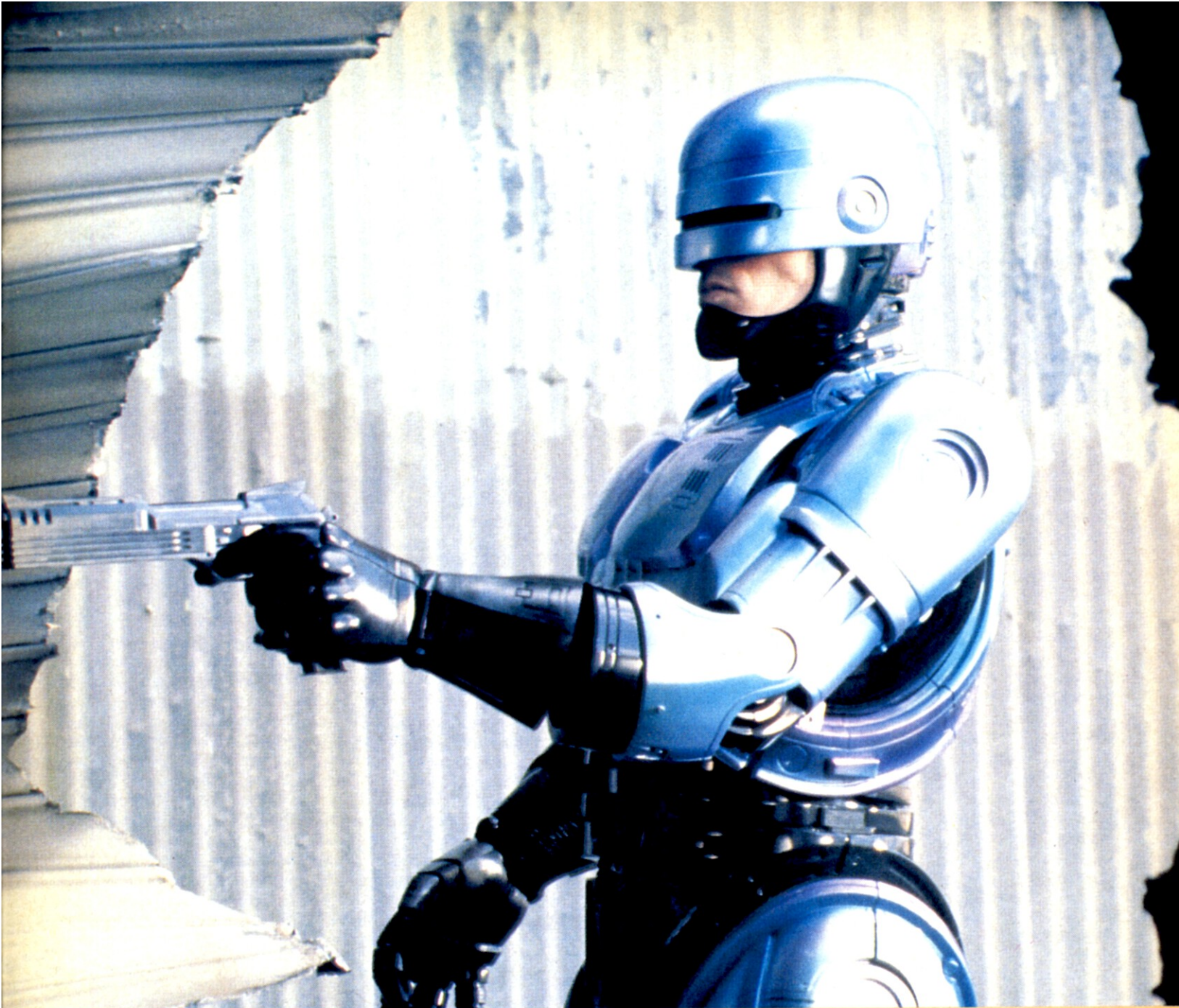
On a cold, October evening last year, a small chunk of that drama was being played out in Houston. The scene: future Detroit's OCP Civic Centrum (actually Houston's Wortham Theatre Center, which will be transformed into an eight-story skyscraper with the post-production addition of a Rocco Gioffre matte painting). The action: a pitched battle between the cyborg good-guy Murphy, otherwise known as RoboCop, and Omni Consumer Products' planned replacement for the too-moral law enforcer, the renegade RoboCop 2.

At one end of the Wortham Theatre plaza, against the wall of the Alley The-

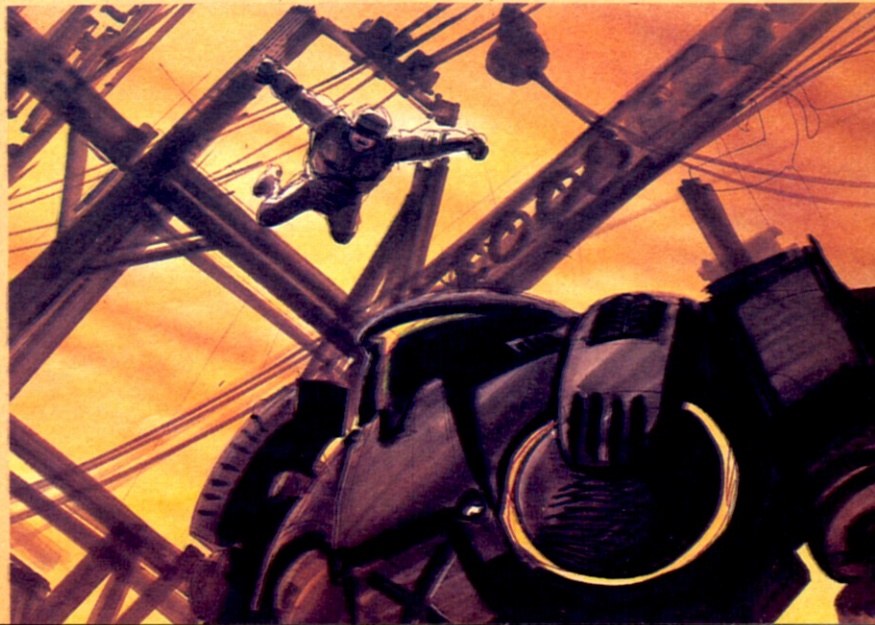
atre, director Irvin Kershner's crew prepared to shoot a series of VistaVision plates that stop-motion animator Phil Tippett would use as background for the largely animated sequences of **RoboCop 2**. At the other end, before the entrance to the theatre itself, the production's second unit crew, under the direction of Conrad Palmisano, was shooting a stunt sequence where several reporters expire under a hail of **RoboCop 2** gunfire, while a car simultaneously explodes.

Kershner was up on a scaffolding by the Alley Theatre, lining up a shot with his director of photography, Mark Irwin. Meanwhile, several crewmembers pulled a sheet off the lifesize, upper-torso model of **RoboCop 2**, and positioned it against a false wall, settling it into a ragged niche meant to represent the dent formed from the impact of robot and concrete. For the sake of clarity, the crew has taken to calling Murphy's nemesis "the Monster," and one look at the eight-foot, Craig Davies-designed cyborg explains why: even without its legs (the creature will appear full-form only in Tippett's animations), **RoboCop 2** is a paragon of armament design gone awry. Its ludicrously wide chest narrows down to a near-waspish waist supported by a tangle of hydraulic struts. Off its shoulders hang two vertical, geared turrets, each of which carries a complement of four to six "vestigial arms" (the term's a misnomer—the arms actually include such handy tools as pincers, cutters, and high-speed Gatling guns). Unlike Murphy/**RoboCop**, there's no face to speak of. Instead, a pair of steel shutters angle forward between the shoulders to form a rudimentary, triangular "head," topped off by a circular cap. If the original **RoboCop** is the future of law enforcement, **RoboCop 2** seems a throwback to Dr. Frankenstein's lab.





Weller in makeup effects expert Rob Bottin's redesigned RoboSuit, given the shiny look of a brand new car and made easier to don and take off. In this scene from the film's climax, Robo stalks the rampaging RoboCop 2 through the hole the out-of-control robot punched in a construction site wall. Below: Preproduction storyboards for the climactic showdown by Phil Norwood. In this early version of the sequence, subsequently rewritten, Robo dangles precariously and is seen attacking from above.



# ROBOCOP 2

## PETER WELLER

*The actor inside the RoboSuit on the rigors of playing the cyborg role.*

*By Dan Persons*

Filming **ROBOCOP 2** in Houston, a city doubling for futuristic Old Detroit, actor Peter Weller sat at the small slip of formica that passed for a table in his trailer/dressing-room. Taking pulls from a bottle of imported, Australian fruit juice, Weller talked about portraying, for the second time, the man/machine that is Murphy/RoboCop.

Before Weller would sign for the sequel, he had one special request. Recalled Weller, "I met [director Irvin] Kersh[ner] and I said, 'Look, if you get back Moni [Yakim, the mime artist credited with developing Weller's RoboMovements], I'll agree.' The guy is part-and-parcel of the success of all this and he's almost virtually unsung. Lest we forget, he's the guy who showed us how to adapt the character to the inconsistencies of the suit and the problems with photographing me in the suit. Whatever wasn't working between my creation and [makeup designer] Rob Bottin's creation and [director] Paul Verhoeven's creation, Moni was the magic element that made things work."

Weller's problems with the RoboSuit on the original film have already been recounted (18:1:17). Weller held, though, that some of the troubles were blown out of proportion. "I had some shit over the thing with the suit," he said. "The suit was late, but it wasn't anybody's fault—it wasn't Paul's fault, it wasn't Bottin's fault—but everybody got nuts because they read, 'Weller said the suit was late.' At the risk of being Jackie Mason, I'm forever sticking my foot in my mouth.

"The suit had some problems, and we didn't get them worked out until the middle of shooting," Weller recalled of the first film. "That's not anybody's fault, but it was all of our responsibility to make it work.



Weller as Murphy.

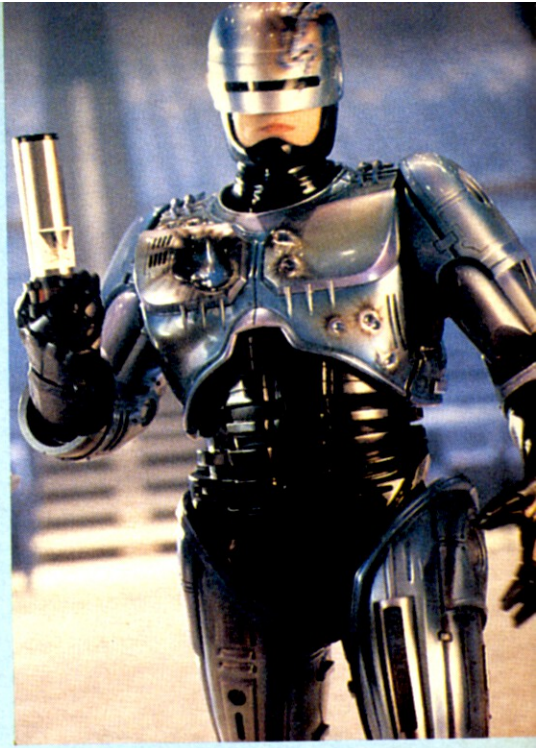
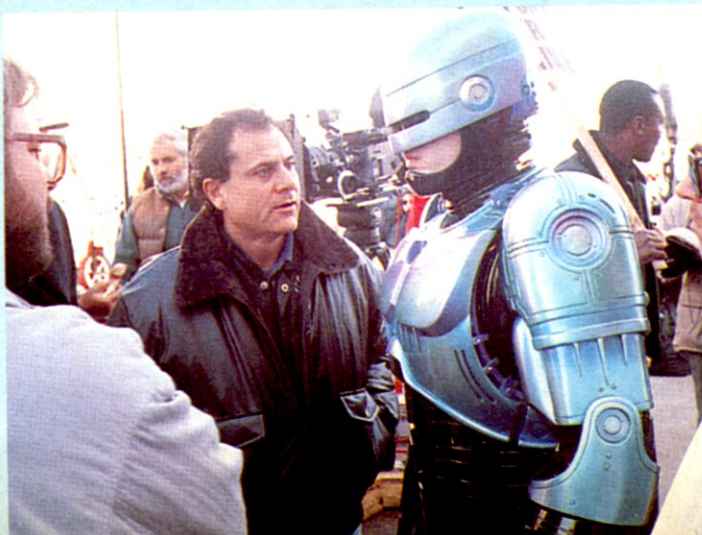
The good news is this suit is more mobile. We knew what we were doing, and also I've had more time to train with Moni. It's more accessible, it's freer, I think it's better looking. It's like night-and-day, compared with the other one. It's got a couple of glitches, but it's light years ahead."

Weller's daily regimen while on the shoot included cross-training—running six miles; swimming 1800 meters; 35-pound weights; ballet stretches—then, just prior to donning the suit, isolation to develop the proper movements. Weller undertook some of this work even when he wasn't portraying the robotic policeman. He admitted, though, "it's a looser form of it. I'll miss a day or two and I won't do it with a trainer. I'll jog six miles instead of running them. I'll swim 1500 meters, but then I'll also eat some junk.

"I have a much better time when I'm working," he said. "My life is better when I'm working. I rarely have enough time for anything else and everybody else kind of takes a back seat to it. But I've just realized that I have to stop making apologies to my friends and family for that. This is the way I like it. I like working 18 hours a day, on my time and my schedule. I don't like to party, I don't drink—that's it.

"The last time, because the suit took so

Weller gets advice on his RoboMovements from mime artist Moni Yakim.



Weller as RoboCop, a crime-fighting machine made from the body of murdered Detroit patrolman Murphy, holding a vial of the ultra-addictive drug, Nuke.

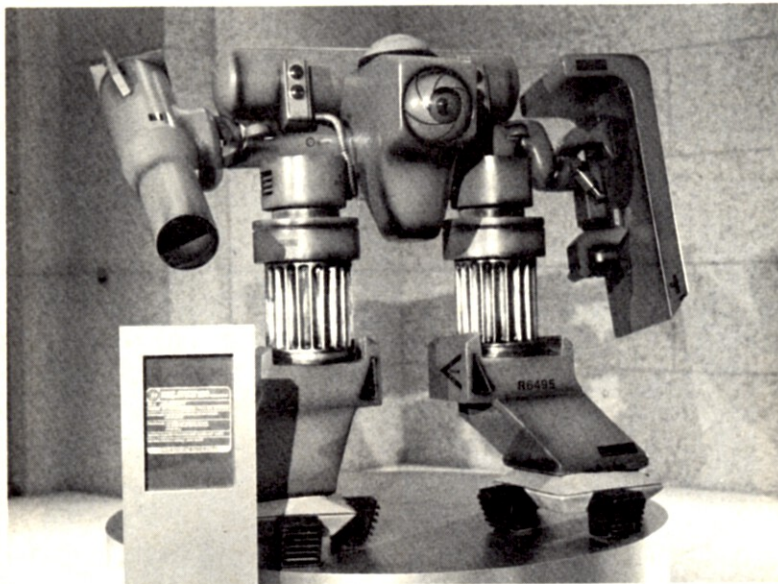
long to put on and was much more complicated than this one—and also with all the physical training I was doing—I was working an 18 hour day, minimum. I was on a special diet. When I got a day off, there really wasn't enough time to relax. I'd find that my body would slow down just enough to get anxious—like withdrawal. By Sunday I was itching to get back to work. It was almost like some kind of biorhythm shock, and I couldn't relax. I was happiest when I was in the thing. I just felt more comfortable in that suit. This time, it's a bit more civilized."

One has to wonder where the civilization can be found in the maelstrom that is your average film shoot. Weller is one of the few who said he didn't notice the rushed nature of this production. But the actor appears to have put the atmosphere to good use, giving some thought to the character of Murphy, and where **ROBOCOP 2** leads him. "It's a continuation of the dilemma of a guy who's doomed to science," he said. "He's reaching out for ways to return to who he was. Except now he's reaching out—he's not just finding out, he's trying to find a way back.

"The arc of the character was the most challenging thing," said Weller, referring to screenwriter Frank Miller's scenario for **ROBOCOP 2**. "RoboCop starts off in the pursuit of certain people, and then he's reprogrammed and he becomes almost comical. He becomes kind of sadly impotent. And then he gets his life back and he becomes pretty brutal." □

## PETER WELLER ON ACTING

**“You think you’re fuckin’ indestructible when you’re 28. When you’re ten years older you know there’s a lot of other things you want to do with your life than be a big shot on a forty-foot screen.”**



G.I. Joebot, an Omni Consumer Products high-tech weapon seen when drug dealers Cain and Hob go 'droid shopping, a prop designed by Craig Davies, built by Stardust Productions.

For a while, Kershner works with a stand-in for *ROBOCOP 2* star Peter Weller, who is back, recreating his role from the original film. According to Davison, not everyone at Orion was anxious to have the actor back. “I didn’t want to do the picture without Weller,” said Davison, “which was something that was suggested by the studio: ‘The hell with it—it’s like the Mummy, just put anybody under the bandages.’ I thought that was probably not a good idea. Maybe it’s an insulting thing to say, but, actually, I think some of Weller’s best performing is done under that rubber suit. He really has it down. To start over, that’s something I wouldn’t look forward to. And, aside from which, you can tell when Boris Karloff was playing the Mummy and when Tom Tyler was doing it.”

Candidly, Weller admitted that, for a while, he was in agreement with the Orion execs. “I had reservations about doing it,” he said of the sequel. “It wasn’t like, ‘Gee, do I want to be connected with RoboCop for the rest of my life?’—which I don’t—but ‘Do I want to go through what it takes to develop and express and delineate a character inside a suit: all the training it takes, the preparation, and on and on and on for months, and blue-screen shots afterwards? Wouldn’t I rather be in the Caribbean, do a ten-week movie and make my money and split?’ The thing is: I just didn’t feel complete about the character. I thought there was something else to say with it.”

Weller emerged from his trailer, the upper half of his RoboSuit covering his chest. This is Rob Bottin’s re-design of the original suit—easier to put on, more maneuverable, and sporting a paint-job meant to give it an “iridescent, new car look.” Under streetlights, the costume is a vivid, unusual blue. When Weller stepped into the more balanced glow of the film lights, the suit miraculously turned a steely blue-gray.

The actor took his position, straddling the back of the monster. As Kershner counted out

the beat, Weller practiced aiming the RoboGun at RoboCop 2’s neck, then jerking it away. When Tippett gets his hands on this footage, he will add animation showing the Monster’s arm trying to snatch the gun from Murphy’s hand.

It’s the second week on location. In its pre-production phase, *ROBOCOP 2* lost two writers and saw its director back down a scant one month before the scheduled start of principal photography. Orion has since brought pressure to bear, making it clear to producer Davison that an early summer release for the film is absolutely imperative. If any of this weighed on Davison’s thoughts, it didn’t show. He wandered the location, consulting with crewmembers, taking time to invite the press corps over to look at RoboCop 2, or to inform them that the matte-black OCP police cars lining one curb had to be bought for the production—Ford wasn’t anxious to have their beloved Taurus connected with *ROBO-*

*COP*’s bleak view of Detroit. His enthusiasm is infectious—one can only hope it is enough to carry cast and crew on what became a complex, hurried production.

Frank Miller, the famed comicbook author/artist (*Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*) that Orion eventually brought in to write *ROBOCOP 2*, tactfully termed the original script for the sequel by *ROBOCOP* creators Ed Neumeier and Mike Miner, “a variable departure.” Weller is more direct in his judgment: “The first script [Neumeier and Miner’s] I didn’t like—I passed, they passed. They’re very talented guys, don’t take it out of context. But it just seemed like a cartoon, compared to the first one. It didn’t really have much at stake. And then Davison called me up with a new one that Frank Miller had written, and another one that Walon Green had helped Miller on, and it looked pretty good.”

Did Weller’s conception of Murphy conform with Miller’s? “There are a lot of guidelines to the character,” said Weller.

“Sometimes Frank would have to alter his stuff only because he wasn’t used to writing the character. You know, Robo wouldn’t make value judgements and he doesn’t make assessments based upon interpretation—it’s just facts. He doesn’t elicit feelings or portray feelings or request feelings. So a lot of those things, when I would read them, I’d say, ‘Frank, this is out of character.’ Instinctively, I knew what was right.”

While Weller has deepened his understanding of Murphy’s soul, he has simultaneously backed away from the more demanding work of the film’s action sequences relying more on his stunt double, Russell Towery, who doubled him in the original. Said Weller, “When I was a younger guy I used to be the good guy and say, ‘Yeah, I’ll do my stunts,’ and all that, but it’s complete bullshit. They were doing this movie in New York and Sean Penn was dropping this thing over a pit. I know Sean, I’ve known him since before he was in movies, and he’s a dedicated kid. But he’s still got that thing like, ‘Yeah, it’s me, I’m gonna do the shot. Let me do the jump.’ Well, he jumps, he sprains his foot in rehearsal. You know, you think you’re fuckin’ indestructible when you’re 28. When you’re 10 years older, you go, ‘Hey, there’s a lot of other things I want to do with my life than be a big shot on a 40-foot screen.’”

In concept, Neumeier and Miner’s *ROBOCOP 2* (see sidebar, page 20) held potential (at the very least, no one could accuse them of making the same film over again). The grid-centered, cyberpunk future they came up with for a sequel is an interesting, if radical, extension of the original film’s themes, and includes such nice touches as an electronic courtroom that RoboCop accesses to perform on-site trials and literally mete out instant justice.

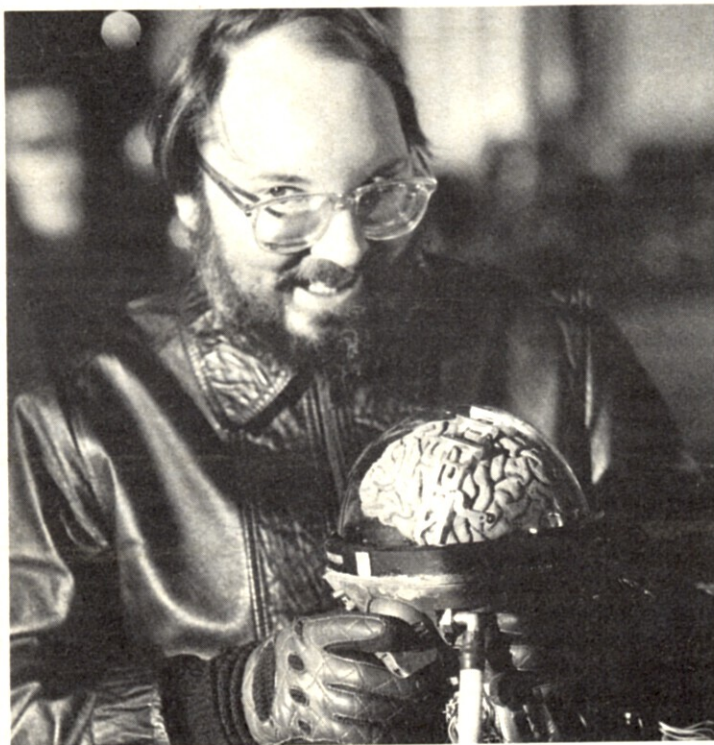
As Davison put it mildly, “Orion didn’t respond to it.” Unwilling to see past the rough edges of Neumeier’s and Miner’s concept, and unable to

develop an alternate storyline that would put a fire under the two authors, Orion eventually threw in the towel, and handed the assignment over to Miller, who, according to Neumeier, did at least four different drafts of *ROBOCOP 2*.

Though Miller said that he didn't read Neumeier and Miner's script until "very late in the process," and that "it had absolutely nothing to do with what I was up to," there are still some curious parallels between the two stories. Both kick off during the Christmas holidays (most likely a reflection of Orion's original desire for a Christmas, '89 release), both center on the conflict between corporate developers and the homeless, both feature Oriental hackers who become Robo's sidekick (in Miller's case, the hacker is actually a 13-year-old Japanese/Irish girl named Keiko McFarland). Neumeier and Miner created a violence-breeding narcotic, Smudge. Miller's final draft features the ultra-addictive Nuke. Neumeier and Miner had their corporate villain bid to purchase the entire U.S. government. Miller introduces OCP's bid to buy out the nearly bankrupt Detroit government.

## SCRIPTING ROBOCOP 2

**"Frank Miller writes terser than many others," said producer Jon Davison. "The dialogue tends to be sparse. Director Irvin Kershner fleshed it out, saying, 'I never had a writer that wrote so tight.'"**



The brain behind *ROBOCOP 2*, producer Jon Davison with the remains of Cain.

Interesting similarities, although not enough to say one script led to the other—especially when it is obvious that the development execs at Orion had their own ideas about what should be in the sequel, and probably threw out the same elements to anyone who tried their hand at the story.

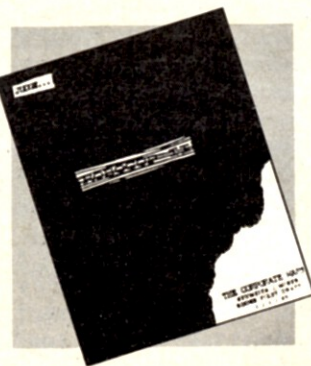
What's more notable is how Miller has turned this sequel into his own. From its satiric character names (Dr. Love, Julian Faxx), to its distrust of members of the psychiatric profession, this is clearly the work of the man who ushered the comic book *Batman* into the cynical '80s. Miller generates a future Detroit even grimmer than Neumeier and Miner's bleak scenario: armed Rehabilitation Therapists cart juvenile delinquents and radicals off to OCP-run death camps, the police struggle to reconcile their oath of public trust with the progressively inhuman demands of their employer, a churchyard is filled with the dead and dying victims of OCP's policies.

Miller's approach was deemed too bleak by Neumeier. "I think, from the early stuff that I saw, that it wasn't a lot of fun," said the co-creator of the original *ROBOCOP*.

## ROBOCOP II: THE CORPORATE WARS—The Story

By Dan Persons

The cover sheet for Ed Neumeier's and Michael Miner's *ROBOCOP II: THE CORPORATE WARS* reads: "The authors wish to apologize for any errors in judgment and/or lapses of grid-logic in this very rough draft." The warning did not seem to be enough for the development execs at Orion Pictures. After having charged the original creators of *ROBOCOP* with not one, but two screenplays (the other being Oliver Stone's abortive *COMPANY MAN*), and laying down a deadline of December 31st, 1987 for the first draft of *ROBOCOP 2*, the company moved fast to find a replacement when it became obvious that, despite numerous meetings devoted to developing some sort of consensus on a story, neither Miner nor Neu-



meier was going to toe the corporate line. In short order, Neumeier and Miner's rough draft of *ROBOCOP 2* also became their last draft.

According to Neumeier, one of the reasons for the success of the original *ROBOCOP* is that "it has a whimsical relationship with the audience. Sometimes, a rather nasty relationship.

Sometimes, it's really out to just fuck the audience." One look at the first five pages of Neumeier and Miner's *ROBOCOP II* is all it takes to discover that the authors fully intended to continue that very special relationship with their public.

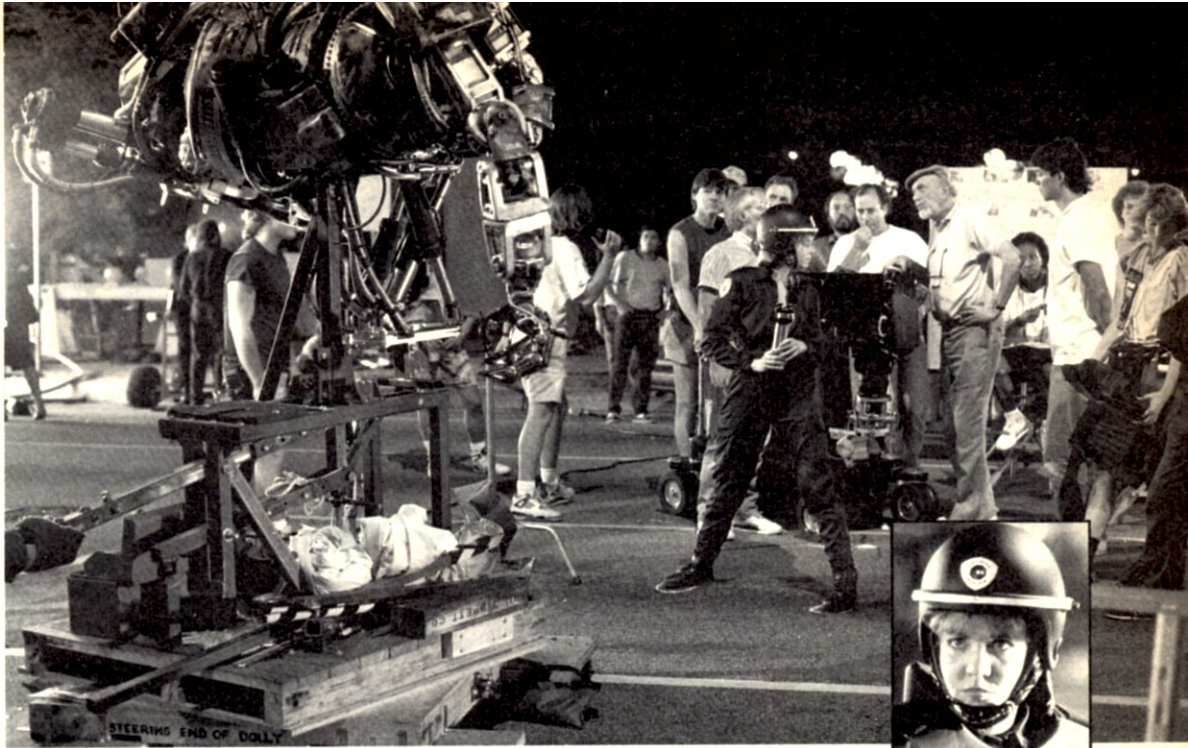
In fact, the story has barely begun before Neumeier and Miner pull off what would have been one of the most audacious mind-fucks in film history, had it ever made it to the screen. Starting off in

suitable, slam-bang fashion with a group of thieves using a truck-mounted cannon to blast their way into a bank, the script no sooner has RoboCop arrive and smoke the criminals than one bad guy, with his last ounce of strength, turns the cannon on Murphy, blowing him to metallic dust. The screen goes black as Murphy's RoboVision fizzles out, then, after several seconds, lights up with a title card: *25 Years Later*.

RoboCop awakens to a radically altered civilization, one where cities have been turned into self-contained "plexes" such as NewYorkPlex, RioPlex, and DelhiPlex. The privileged citizens of these communities spend their days on the LeisureGrid, munching burgers served up by Food-ServiceDroids or cavorting with SexBots in high-tech brothels. Those who can't afford the go-go lifestyle become OutPlexers, derelicts exiled to the limitless shantytowns that surround the cities' walls. The President of the U.S. (or AmeriPlex) is a

"That would be my biggest complaint on a creative and financial level. I think one of the things about ROBOCOP is that it doesn't take itself seriously, or it plays a game about taking itself seriously... It promises a ride, as opposed to a melodrama. It's a hair-splitting concept, I think. That's why, when I read [Miller's script], I went, 'Well... I don't know...'"

Maybe the folks at Orion had the same reaction. It's clear that between Miller's early ideas and the final plot line as described in ROBOCOP 2's press notes, numerous changes were made to Miller's concept. Almost everyone involved on the production talked about how much "funnier" this film would be in comparison to the first. Focus has shifted from the rise of corporate fascism to that ol' bugaboo, illicit drugs. Instead of the film's climax being a showdown between RoboCop and the amassed forces of OCP, RoboCop 2 alone runs amuck at his unveiling, threatening his creators and the general populace. While there's still room in this scenario for some wicked satire, there seems to have been a backing-down, a decision to trade in an expansion upon the nightmarish future of the first



Filming Nancy Allen as Lewis (inset) in a scene with the partial full-size mockup of RoboCop 2.

film in favor of a partial recapitulation of the original film's plot elements (see sidebar on Miller's original concept, page 28).

Davison expressed satisfaction with the way Miller's script turned out. "He was pretty in synch with it from the beginning," said Davison. "He writes terser than many other writers. The dialogue tends to be very sparse. One of the

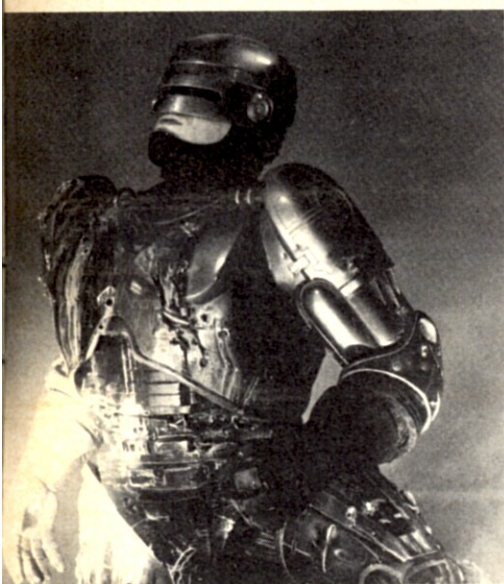
things Kersh has been doing is fleshing out the dialogue, saying, 'Well, I never had a writer that wrote it so tight.'"

**B**irraporetti's, is a dimly lit restaurant around the corner from the ROBOCOP 2 location where Davison has gathered reporters to share a drink and impart a little bit of

hitherto unpublicized RoboLore. (For instance: when, in ROBOCOP, Murphy shoots away the baby-food jars, it's his way of telling partner Lewis that nothing worthwhile could ever come of their relationship).

"After ROBOCOP, I went to work on DICK TRACY for nine months," said Davison about how he got involved on the sequel. "And it just got to the point where I had to either

## Behind the Original Sequel That Was Never Made.



In the original film, writers Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner blasted Robo and audience expectations: their unfiled sequel would have shocked audiences.

former comedian (the more things change...), while the man calling the shots—and maneuvering to buy out the U.S. government and turn it into a privately owned, corporate entity—is "super-entrepreneur" Ted Flicker.

Discovered by two of Flicker's flunkies in the ruins of the now-defunct Omni Consumer Products, RoboCop is revived, repaired, and interfaced with NeuroBrain, the plex's central computer system. Soon enough, he is entangled in the flunkies desperate grab for power, and finds himself engaged in an attempt to discredit the commander of Internal Grid Security, involved in a bloodthirsty campaign to remove defenseless OutPlexers from the city's perimeter, and finally driven to take matters into his own hands when a group of terrorists threaten the plex with a neutron bomb. Throughout, he is tinkered with by a reclusive scientist, aided by a Chinese hacker, and courted by the disembodied spirit of NeuroBrain (actually

the thought impulses of the scientist's dead wife).

The script's plexes seem even more media-happy than the television-obsessed Detroit of ROBOCOP—the airwaves are filled with rapid-fire NewsBlips and commercials for mood-enhancing drugs, while the major opinion-shaper of the day is a space-bred rapper named MoonDog. Yet, for all of its intriguing aspects, the script as it stands is very much what Neumeier and Miner proclaimed it to be: a rough draft. If they had been given the chance to do further work, they may have imbued the tale with the humanity it lacked, restored RoboCop to the center of the film rather than reducing him to a pawn in the hands of future-day movers and shakers, and cleared up a storyline that jumbled prestige-hungry executives, power-mad terrorists, and sadistic security police in a nearly incomprehensible, internecine conflict. Of course, they never got that chance. □

one project or the other, and decided to do **ROBOCOP 2**. **DICK TRACY**, I think, is going to be terrific and I think it's going to do very well. What it came down to was that **ROBOCOP** is my movie and **DICK TRACY** is more Warren [Beatty]'s movie."

Davison has mixed feelings about doing a sequel—any sequel. "I happen to like **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** better than **STAR WARS**. I think it's the best of the three," he said. "So that's something positive to be said for them. But then there are so many things negative. Generally, they get worse. What you really want to do is to make a completely different movie. But if the audience had a good time at the first movie, they want to repeat that experience, so you don't want to make it too different. It's a fine line."

**ROBOCOP** director Paul Verhoeven was unavailable to do the sequel due to his commitment to direct Carolco's **TOTAL RECALL**. Davison's first choice for director was Tim Hunter, of **RIVER'S EDGE** fame. "Nice fellow," said Davison, "good friend. I thought he was a good choice. [He has] a real dark sensibility, and he's good with performers—he has, generally, a very realistic tone with actors. I thought that would pay off for **ROBOCOP 2**. But he had a lot of trouble with the script, and decided that it really wasn't a project for him."

Most of effects designer Craig Davies' work conceptualizing the renegade **RoboCop 2** was done under the guidance of Hunter. Of the experience, Davies said, "I liked him. I was looking forward to his interpretation of **ROBOCOP**. He was very easy to work with, because he comes from a literary background, rather than a visual background. He deals with things in terms of literary concepts. I thought that was really interesting."

By the time Kershner had logged on, the creation of **RoboCop 2** was all but a *fait accompli*. "[We worked] a little bit," said Davies. "The thing was made by the time he came

## KERSHNER ON DIRECTING

**"I wanted a different style of shooting. I wanted the characters to go further than they went the first time. Robo has to deal with the fact that he's a man in an iron suit, a man in a no-exit situation."**



OCP borrows a brain for their **RoboCop 2** from simple-minded drug dealer Cain (Tom Noonan), to better control the new cyborg. Inset: Stephen Dupuis' makeup prop held by hairstyling assistant Frank Montesanto.



on. He had some ideas, but they were too late to be implemented."

When Hunter bowed out in June, 1989, Davison had little time to find a replacement before the scheduled start of production. Kershner was tapped for the post for the simplest of reasons: "He said he would do it. And he's a very talented guy—from **THE LUCK OF GINGER COFFEE** to **NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN**, there's a lot of good pictures in there.

"On the first movie, nobody wanted to direct," said Davison. "It was probably turned down by every director in the United States who was any good. And nobody really wanted to be in it, either, let alone direct it. I assumed that for a sequel it would be much the same, 'cause then they've got an act to follow—Verhoeven did an excellent job. That probably intimidated a lot of people. And there are a lot of directors who just don't want to be involved in a sequel. I got that a lot.

"Originally, I had talked to

Alex Cox [**REPO MAN**, **SID AND NANCY**] about directing the picture. Alex said, 'Well, yeah, I'll do it.' And then, about a week later, he called back and said, 'No, I'm not going to do it'—Alex has a very short attention span. I said, 'What changed your mind?' He said, 'Well, I just went to see **EXORCIST II**. There shouldn't be any sequels.'

"At the point where Tim Hunter had decided to bow out of the project we were a month away from going on location," said Davison. "And all the major effects sequences were placed at the beginning of the schedule. [Kershner] had been there before. He knew how to set up complicated effects sequences. And there's not a lot of people out there that do."

Kershner said the plot point of the conflict between Murphy's human and mechanical sides was one of the reasons he signed onto the project. "I loved the fact that I had a chance to do a wry, satiric comment on life in our time, on what's happening to man," said Kershner. "I find that the

cyborg that is **Robo** is really a metaphor for people in our society. They're becoming roboticized without knowing it. They're so programmed that they're practically programmed like **Robo** is. They can be programmed to be reactive in a very clever way, or to be totally stupid and nuts. And we show that."

When asked if it's difficult to carry a sequel forward and still get something of his personal style into it, Kershner is emphatic in his response: "It's *totally* personal," he said. "This film is totally my film. Even though I'm continuing the story, as far as I'm concerned there was no first story.

"The idea is to think of it as an on-going story. That's all it is for me. I don't try to copy the style. I just say, 'Okay, I'm going to continue the story.' I think it's just as valid to do an on-going story as to do any other story." Kershner should know, having directed **THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK**, or **STAR WARS 2**.

**P**ut the question to Davison about what in the movie will draw the most attention and he comes up with three items: "Phil Tippett, Phil Tippett, Phil Tippett." While his work on the second installment of the **STAR WARS** trilogy won Tippett legions of effects fans, there may be no more enthusiastic booster than Davison—whose admiration goes back to their work on **PIRANHA**, a film Davison produced for Roger Corman, who gave Davison his low-budget start in the business.

"When I was facing doing **ROBOCOP** again," said Davison, "I thought, 'Well, they're offering me money, and that's a good reason. But what's the *real* reason to do it? What's an artistic reason?' And the artistic reason is: 'Well, we could give Phil Tippett more money, and he could do a lot of *really neat* stuff.' Which, to me, justified making the whole movie. And Phil is indeed doing wonderful stuff.

"He controls everyone's

# ROBOCOP 2

## IRVIN KERSHNER

*The director of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK on taking over Robo's second outing under very trying circumstances.*

By Dan Persons

At the point when Irvin Kershner agreed to tackle ROBOCOP 2, the production was 11 weeks away from the start of principal photography—hardly adequate time for the director to become acquainted with the demands and difficulties of his project. Kershner's response was to dive in head-first, hoping that he wouldn't hit bottom.

"We didn't have a lot of preparation for this film, so I had to do a lot of winging it," said Kershner. "I was fortunate, I kept [screenwriter] Frank Miller with me the whole time, so we could continue our pre-production while I was shooting. We worked on the set on the material for the next week, did the reworking of the scenes as I learned about the characters and the situations, then integrated them into the shooting. Of necessity, the pre-production continued throughout the production because we only had a few weeks of preparation on a picture that could



Kershner directs Peter Weller as RoboCop as cinematographer Mark Irwin (r) lines up the shot. Kershner stepped in to replace director Tim Hunter with just eleven weeks till the start of shooting.

have taken nine months."

At the time of this interview last February, two weeks following the wrap of principal photography, Kershner was enmeshed in the task of editing his footage. From that point of view, the director of such mega-productions as THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN, admitted that the seat-of-the-pants approach to shooting

wasn't an overwhelming hardship. "I was a documentary cameraman and director for years. Everything you do is seat-of-the-pants in documentaries, because you react to what is, and what you find. To me, that's great fun. It's a harrowing experience at times, but I love the challenge. I like climbing mountains.

"The first thing I did was sit down and storyboard the major action scenes—we started with the climax and some of the most climactic action scenes. That was the first month's shooting. I did the breakdown and walked the locations right away. Luckily, the storyboard worked. But we couldn't do the entire film as a storyboard. The rest of it I had to do when I found time, or I had to wing it on locations.

"Every scene was a challenge, it was all a challenge. If I had had a chance to plan it the way I usually plan a picture, I would have felt much more secure. The way it was done, I had to really react to what I

found. For many locations I would pick one day [for the shoot]—three months later, there I was shooting, and I'd walk in that morning seeing it for the first time. And I'd have to walk around and make up changes right there and start shooting.

"What I did, I tried to keep up with each day's work, and cut out sequences that I knew would end up on the cutting-room floor. I'd say, 'Wait a minute, why are we shooting that sequence? Just because it's in the script?' So I would go to the producer and say, 'Look, we

don't have to shoot this sequence.' He always agreed. We had a very good rapport, Jon Davison and myself."

— Just as Kershner brought his own distinctive touch to THE I HOPE THAT IT'S REALLY GOOD.

For now, both writers have moved on to other projects—with other partners—and, despite an occasional regret over what might have been, are taking the debacle in stride. "On the whole," said Neumeier, "this is not a new Hollywood story. This happens all the time. People make very profitable movies for big corporations and never see a dime of their contractual participation. People are often replaced, right and left."

And as for the continued good health of Detroit's sole cyborg crime-fighter? Said Neumeier, "ROBOCOP's great. They should go out and make lots of money on this one and the next one and the one after that. It would all be fine by me. It'll probably build me a nice house, somewhere." □

Kershner sets up RoboCop's reprogramming lobotomy at the hands of OCP.



fate, because he knows what he needs to deliver what we need," said Davison about the key role Tippett plays on this production. "He knows how the plates have to be shot and the lighting conditions and the camera angles. And rather than lord it over the crew, like, 'Don't tell me. I'm the one who knows,' he is just the friendliest, nicest guy. He had a salute, an Animator's Salute, that he would give. By the time the show was over, everybody was walking around giving the Animator's Salute." (For those of you playing along at home, the Animator's Salute: press a clenched fist to your heart, grunt "Animator!" in your best Steve Reeves/HERCULES UNCHAINED voice.)



In a press visit to the ROBOCOP 2 production offices, the haste with which shooting is taking place is just barely apparent. The offices are located in a tower next door to the Hyatt hotel used by the crew. Most of the business of production is handled here, in a large, picture-windowed space equipped with about six desks and a motorized treadmill (no, that isn't a Southern Californian's idea of standard office equipment. It's a prop that will appear in the office of OCP's Old Man, again played by Dan O'Her-actors. I thought that would pay off for ROBOCOP 2. But he had a lot of trouble with the script, and decided that it really wasn't a project for him."

Most of effects designer Craig Davies' work conceptualizing the renegade RoboCop 2 was done under the guidance of Hunter. Of the experience, Davies said, "I liked him. I was looking forward to his interpretation of ROBOCOP. He was very easy to work with, because he comes from a literary background, rather than a visual background. He deals with things in terms of literary concepts. I thought that was really interesting."

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# ROBOCOP 2

## CORPORATE WARS

*How scripters Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner battled with Orion execs on the sequel.*

*By Dan Persons*

There is no doubt in Ed Neumeier's mind: Orion didn't just tell him and his partner, Mike Miner, that it'd be nice if they did the script for ROBOCOP 2; Orion didn't just politely request that he and Miner do the script;



Screenwriters Neumeier (left) and Miner (right).

they demanded it. According to Neumeier, who co-wrote the original film with Miner and acted as its co-producer, "ROBOCOP comes out, we go from relative obscurity to suddenly being extraordinarily popular writers—we start getting a lot of offers. The first thing we are told we must do is write the sequel to ROBOCOP. We are even threatened at that point, sort of obliquely, and we are told, by unnamed people at Orion, that even though we wrote it, even though it's a great success, if we don't do it the way they want us to do it, and hurry up and do it, then they'll kick us off the project."

It doesn't sound like the most auspicious beginning for a sequel. It wasn't, actually—a point borne out by the fact that, one and a half years after that less-than-encouraging start, it was Frank Miller, author of *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, who made the commute to Houston to do the necessary tweaks to his script. So... what happened?

To start with, there were Orion's ground rules, as related by Neumeier and Miner: the two writers were to come up with the sequel to ROBOCOP; in defiance of Sinatra's Law, they were to do the script Orion's way; and, in order to get the film into the theatres by,

at latest, Christmas 1989, they were to deliver a first draft of that script by December 31, 1987, or lose one point of involvement (read "money") in the film. By the time Neumeier and Miner got down to working on the project, about mid-September, they had three and a half months in which to build their story. Not necessarily an impossible deadline.

Except that, about the same time, the hottest director of the year, PLATOON's Oliver Stone, tapped the two writers for COMPANY MAN, his black-comic vision of the CIA's 1984 reorganization of the Contras. Also to be produced at Orion, it was a film with its own agenda: Stone was adamant that the project be written, shot, and on the screens of America before the 1988 presidential election. Neumeier and Miner, perhaps letting their enthusiasm get the better of them, agreed to take on both films simultaneously, and forthwith flew down to Central America for two weeks of research.

According to Neumeier, nobody at Orion thought this would cause problems with ROBOCOP II. That attitude changed when the first admittedly rough draft of the script was handed in on January 1, 1988. Said Neumeier, "We turn it in—to get our point—and

they don't know what to do with it."

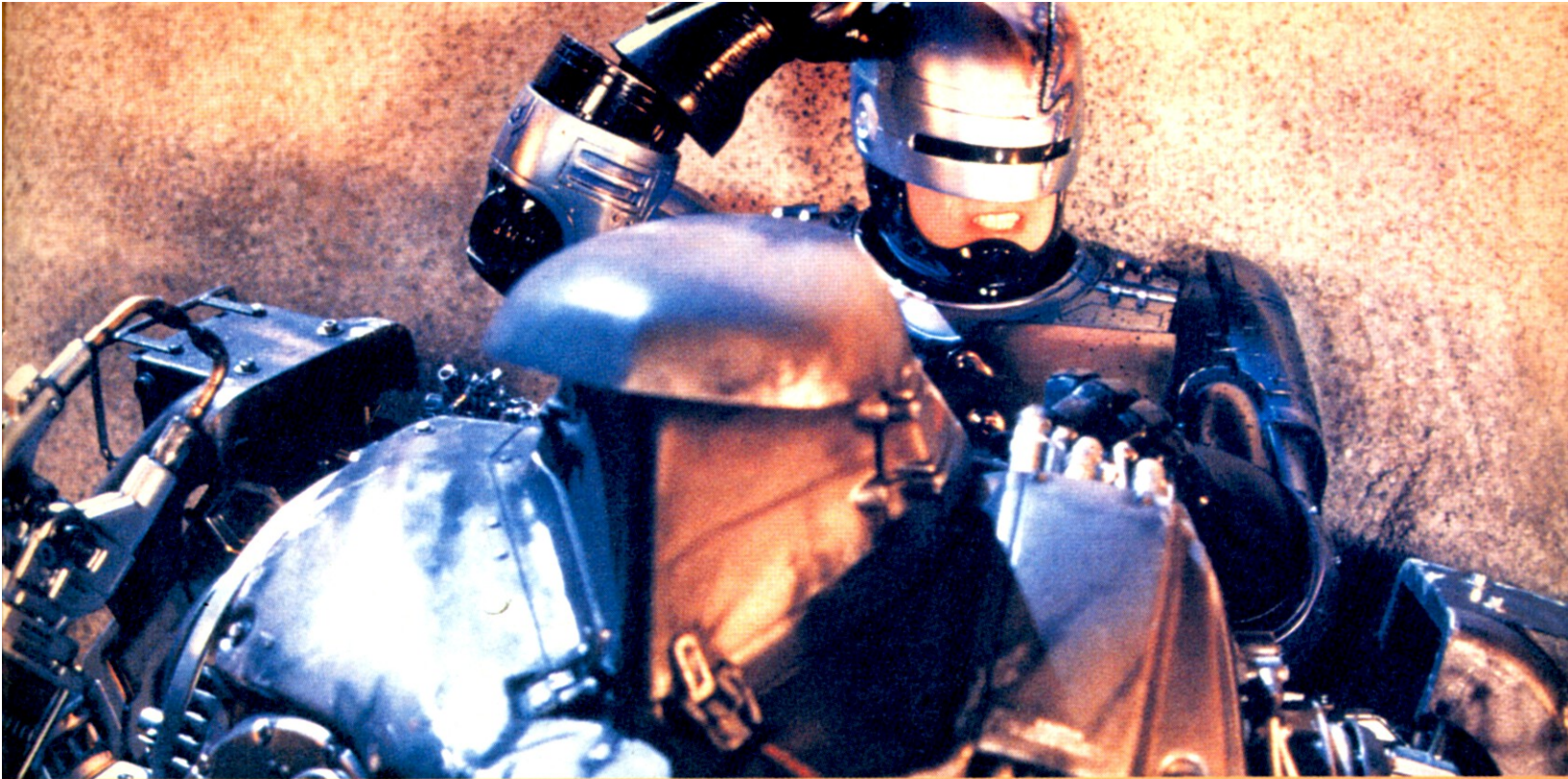
Things got worse. With their rough, rushed script in corporate hands, the property then entered what Neumeier called "Development Hell." Said Miner, "The company is a group of bottom-line people who don't develop scripts. They usually

buy finished scripts. Their entire reputation is based on business affairs, which is, of course, lawyers and contracts. The entire creative arm of the company has atrophied." Added Neumeier, "We were sitting in high-level meetings, and an unnamed executive of the company would come in and say, 'I know: Robo goes to Washington, D.C. and busts up the WedTech scandal. Write that one!' And this goes on for a couple of months."

As if the creativity gap at Orion wasn't enough of a stumbling block, in March 1988 the Writers' Guild began a strike that would cripple the industry for the next five months. Given their newly-bestowed fame, Neumeier and Miner had little choice but to tuck ROBOCOP II in a corner and pray that labor and management could come to a speedy agreement. This, too, did not sit well with their employers. Said Miner, "The senior officers of Orion were calling us every day, saying, 'So, what else are you writing on the second draft of ROBOCOP II?' We would say, 'Of course, if the union found out we were writing on ROBOCOP II, we would be fined 110% of what you paid us.'"

At this point, with Orion champing at the bit, and the writers taking a stand for the sake of themselves and their





Weller as RoboCop, battling rampaging RoboCop 2. Unlike their creation, writers Neumeier and Miner didn't come out on top in their script battle with Orion Pictures.

colleagues, ROBOCOP 2 producer Jon Davison took an unorthodox step. Through his company, Tobor Pictures, Davison signed with the Guild, and then hired Frank Miller, ostensibly to write the script for ROBOCOP 3. Davison was unavailable for comment on this turn of events—but what appears to have happened next was that the sequel number was marked down 33%, and Miller supplanted Neumeier and Miner as the writer of ROBOCOP 2.

And what happened to Oliver Stone's COMPANY MAN? Stone, after initiating the project and receiving a commitment from Paul Newman to star, decided to drop the film in favor of a screen adaptation of Eric Bogosian's TALK RADIO. Said Miner, "Oliver Stone kept saying, 'I want to make this film, I want to get it in the theatres before the election of George Bush, I want to blow the lid off what's happening in Central America.' That's what he said. What he didn't say was he was developing nine other scripts at the same time." By the time Stone dropped the project, Neumeier and Miner's stock at Orion was close to worthless.

Even when COMPANY MAN received a new, and influential, promise of life,

**"Orion is a group of bottom-line people who don't develop scripts," said Miner. "Their entire reputation is based on business affairs, which is, of course, lawyers and contracts."**

courtesy of ROBOCOP director Paul Verhoeven, the executives at Orion were not eager to listen. Said Miner, "Verhoeven loved COMPANY MAN. He went to Orion and said, 'What can I do to direct this?' But in the eyes of Orion, we lost the director of PLATOON for them. Even though the script was a knockout, that made them pissed at us." It also made them pass on Verhoeven, according to Miner. At this point, neither Miner nor Neumeier hold much hope that COMPANY MAN will ever make it in front of a camera.

As might be expected, the two writers have not been closely involved with the development of Miller's script for ROBOCOP 2. Said Miner, "It's sitting on my shelf. My girlfriend read it and hated it. I haven't read it." Neumeier, on the other hand, has seen several drafts of the script, under an arrangement that seems vaguely reminiscent of WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA

WOOLF?: "I'm continually asked to come in and read [the scripts] and help with them, and then I am continually thrown out on my ass and told that I am going to be sued. I gave up the ROBOCOP habit about six months ago."

Not completely, though. For his part, Neumeier served as a consultant for the Saturday-morning ROBOCOP cartoon series. And, of course, both writers stand to profit one way or the other from the character's popularity. In Neumeier's mind, that's now where most of his interest in ROBOCOP resides: "There's the normal, net-point issues, which a bunch of people are involved in," he said. "Additionally, there's a merchandising issue that Michael and I are involved in, by virtue of the Writers' Guild contract. Those won't be resolved for the next... God knows how long. Lots of lawyers will be involved."

Yet, despite an experience

that has left a bitter taste in both writers' mouths, neither claim to harbor any malice toward ROBOCOP 2 producer Jon Davison. Said Neumeier, "Davison was the perfect producer to do [ROBOCOP and ROBOCOP 2]. There's no other guy... Michael and I used to say that we had three or four major strokes of luck. And I think Davison was one of the first." Added Miner, "[Davison's] working very hard on number two, and I hope that it's really good."

For now, both writers have moved on to other projects—with other partners—and, despite an occasional regret over what might have been, are taking the debacle in stride. "On the whole," said Neumeier, "this is not a new Hollywood story. This happens all the time. People make very profitable movies for big corporations and never see a dime of their contractual participation. People are often replaced, right and left."

And as for the continued good health of Detroit's sole cyborg crime-fighter? Said Neumeier, "ROBOCOP's great. They should go out and make lots of money on this one and the next one and the one after that. It would all be fine by me. It'll probably build me a nice house, somewhere." □

# ROBOCOP 2™

## SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

*Oscar-winner Phil Tippett supervised the stop-motion creation of RoboCop 2, the new film's monster cyborg villain.*

*By Dan Persons*

ROBOCOP 2 visual effects supervisor Phil Tippett used as many as eight stop-motion crews in order to complete the 160 animated shots needed for the film. By Tippett's estimate, that's roughly four times the number of stop-motion shots used in the original ROBOCOP. With close to 95% of RoboCop 2's screen time coming from Tippett's Berkeley, California shop, the animator admitted that the pressure to deliver is incredible.

"To effectively generate these shots, we've got an extremely tight production schedule," said Tippett, a special effects Oscar-winner for his work on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. "My effects unit is busy building models. Simultaneously we're shooting the background plate action in Houston. It's going to be a real photo-finish, because I'm flipping between the two locations.

"There's never enough time. Even when everything is working the way you want it to work it's difficult. So, coupled with some very complicated models and some very ambitious sequences, the schedule and the deadline is a tremendous problem."

Tippett, of course, was responsible for the show-stopping ED-209 sequences in the original ROBOCOP, and will handle a few walk-ons for the bumbling robot in the sequel. RoboCop 2, he said, is a completely different story: "He is a scary monster, as opposed to ED-209, who had a lethal quality, but also had a great deal of humor injected into his



Animator Randy Dutra positions the stop-motion RoboCop 2 at Phil Tippett's effects studio.

action—he was the brunt of a number of jokes. This character has a bit more purpose.

"We're trying to make something that has the qualities of a monster, something that has a very intangible quality to it. If you look at it immediately, you don't quite understand exactly what you're seeing, it doesn't have immediate readability. Unlike ED-209, which had an immediate, sculptural presence, this thing is a little more difficult, visually, to get ahold of. We're trying to make the thing a bit more vague, so it can exist in the mind's eye of the viewer. We're filming so many shots, though I'm sure by the end of the movie there won't be any doubt in anybody's mind what the thing looks like. But it's very important for the initial shots to keep RoboCop 2 very mysterious."

ROBOCOP 2 represents something of a reunion between Tippett and director Irvin Kershner, who both plied their respective crafts for George Lucas on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. In actuality, this is the closest the two

men have worked. "My association with [Kershner] on ROBOCOP 2 is a great deal more intense than on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK," said Tippett. "At that time, I was located in the effects facility in San Rafael [Lucasfilm's ILM], and I was only involved with him in the preproduction phases of the project—designing, getting some of the stop-motion characters together, along with Jon Berg. When they went off to shoot the live-action, I remained in San Rafael and

which occurred smack in the middle of ROBOCOP 2's principal photography and had many of the film's Houston-based crew desperately trying to contact loved ones, could significantly derail effects production. "It set us back about a week, not more," said the San Francisco-based Tippett. "We didn't even have too much damage from the thing. I was in Texas at the time. I'm a native Californian, I've waited all my life for a big earthquake, and I missed it!" □

Miniature set supervisor Bart Trickel peeks through the opening caused when RoboCop and RoboCop 2 plunge through a multi-story building to the road beneath.



lihy). Around this space are arranged Davison's private office, another room in which two crewmembers are using an Amiga computer and some off-the-shelf software to generate graphics for the film's various video displays, and one room in which stands a lone, coin-operated ROBOPOL video game.

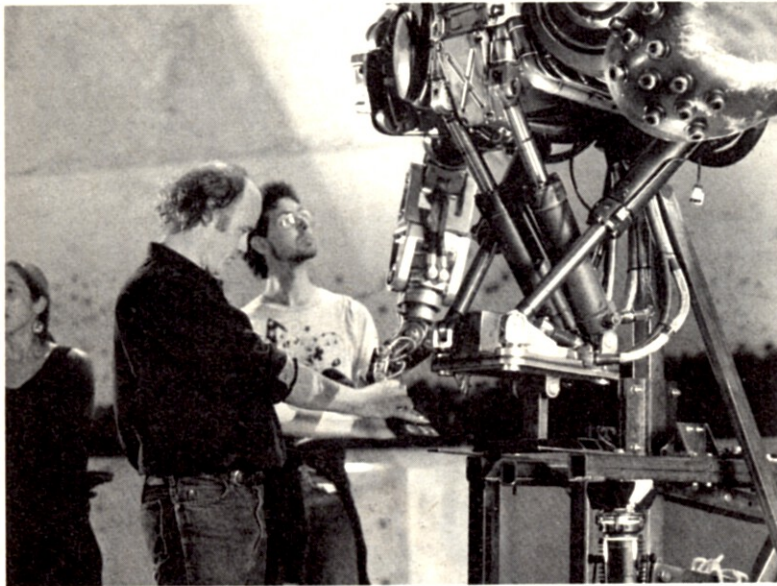
Also set off from the rest of the crew is production designer Peter Jamison's (HOWARD THE DUCK—"I had nothing to do with the duck. *Nothing!*") art department. Here, with windows overlooking one of Houston's lightly trafficked intersections, Jamison and company create the sketches and drawings that will turn Houston into future Detroit. Against one wall hangs a cork board filled with sketches, including a drawing of an Old Detroit slum street, complete with battered storefronts and overflowing garbage cans. According to publicist Paul Sammon, the location has already been scouted, and will need little, if any, re-dressing to achieve the proper look. When a request is made to visit the site, he demurs, saying that there's little to actually see.

It may be that the actual location isn't all that impressive. It may also be that he's reluctant to take a car-full of equipment-laden reporters into one of Houston's seamier neighborhoods. Not unlike the cavernous gap between ROBOPOL's monied high-rise dwellers and its impoverished Old Detroit inhabitants, it turns out that the sleek towers of downtown Houston are surrounded by poverty, bitterness, and anger. During the press corps' nighttime visit to the shoot's Wortham Center location, we are repeatedly warned not to stray beyond the barricades, and by no means to attempt the scant, six-block walk back to the hotel, either alone or in a group.

The cork board in Jamison's art department office brims with other arresting images: the exterior and interior of the Civic Centrum during OCP's grand dedication ceremonies

## ROBOCOP 2 EFFECTS

**"We're trying to make something that has the qualities of a monster," said Phil Tippett. "It's very important for the initial shots to keep RoboCop 2 somewhat mysterious, vague and intangible."**



Special effects supervisor Phil Tippett (l) rigs a mechanical arm of the partial, full-size prop RoboCop 2 in Houston, to be matched to the stop-motion model in postproduction.

(a design that Jamison calls, "I.M. Pei meets Albert Speer"); a drawing of an abandoned auto factory where a vanquished RoboCop will be dismantled by Cain, the film's drug-running villain; an exterior view of the low-rent Detroit police station, complete with exposed air-conditioner units and torn-up roadway.



Right across from the board sits Jamison himself, taking a minute off from his work to explain how he is carrying the look of ROBOPOL forward in the sequel. "People expect to see the similarity, in some way," said Jamison. "Things having to do with the police and Robo I've tried to harken back to the first picture. With OCP, I've said, 'The hell with it.' I've just done something different.

"We've had some trouble with locations here that have caused ideas to be completely re-thought, and approaches to sets as they're written to be changed," said Jamison. "The

scene where they strip Robo was supposed to happen in something akin to an automobile factory, on an assembly line where he's pinned down with a robotic arm and ripped apart. And Cain goes, 'Hmm, I always liked toys. I wonder what this is made out of?' And they throw him back on the street in front of the police station as a pile of junk.

"We had a place to do that, a pipe foundry for oil wells—it was out of business, obviously—and the machinery they used to thread the pipes was perfect to lay Robo on and clamp him down. We might have had to do a few adaptations, but it would have worked very well. The person who owns the place had gone to California to save his business, and that fell through. California said 'No' to offshore drilling. He didn't want to have anything to do with us, movies, anything from California. So we lost that location and we ended up in a sludge plant. And, quite frankly, we still haven't blocked it, because Kersh hasn't had time to go to

the new location. We've looked at it, we've talked about it, briefly, but as to how we're going to effect all this, I really don't know. That'll be an arduous weekend."

As Jamison talked a crewmember showed up informing the designer that the dailies were about to be screened. Sammon told us that Kershner had okayed a rarely bestowed honor: the opportunity to view some of the rough footage. We walked down a short corridor lined with more production art—this time, designs of robots that will appear in the scene where Cain and his 13-year-old enforcer, Hob, go window-shopping for protection from Murphy. The corridor opens up at the end into a makeshift screening room: projectors just to the left, screen positioned at the far wall. Between sat Kersh and his crew, occasionally swapping a whispered comment amongst themselves, but mostly, silently, watching.

VistaVision footage was run first, static exteriors and streets littered with overturned, burning cars, rear-projection material to be used by Tippett. Every now and then, two crewmembers appear on-camera, carrying a life-size, cardboard cut-out of RoboCop 2, which Tippett will use to judge the scale of the animated figure in comparison to its surroundings.

Thirty-five millimeter takes followed. A group of bullet-proof-vested police officers fire at some unseen target. A wounded officer drags himself agonizingly away from a burning car, as the sounds of all-out war explode on the soundtrack. Nancy Allen (Officer Lewis) determinedly pilots an armored vehicle (on-screen it will collide with the Monster). Peter Weller straddles RoboCop 2's back, aiming and firing his RoboGun. The fruits of several days work, the footage runs less than a half hour.

After the screening, cinematographer Mark Irwin joined us in a small reception area. We settled down in a space whose walls were plastered with storyboards depicting the already-filmed sequence of the unveil-

ing of RoboCop 2: a spotlight-bathed model of Delta City splits open, and the monster rises from between its halves; later in the sequence, the cyborg snatches the remote control out of its demonstrator's hands, and snaps it in half.

Of the boards, Irwin said, "I never look at them on the set. It's deceiving, 'cause when you look at something that an artist has drawn, you're looking at something that, photographically, may or may not be possible. He sees something with the compression of a 50 or 100 [mm focal length lens] with the depth of an 18. The director says, 'Why can't I get this?' Well, use a pencil, that's how you get it."

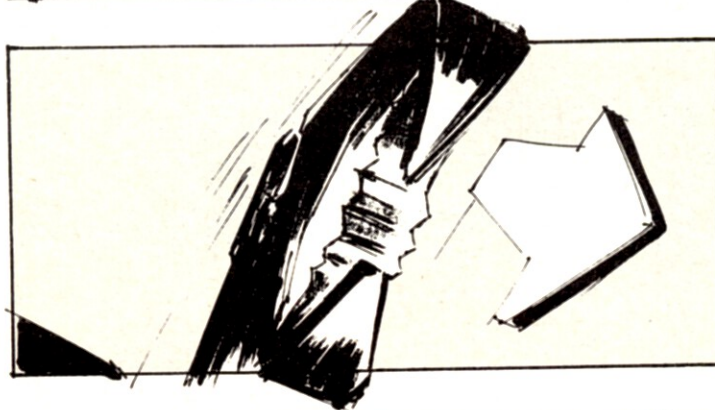
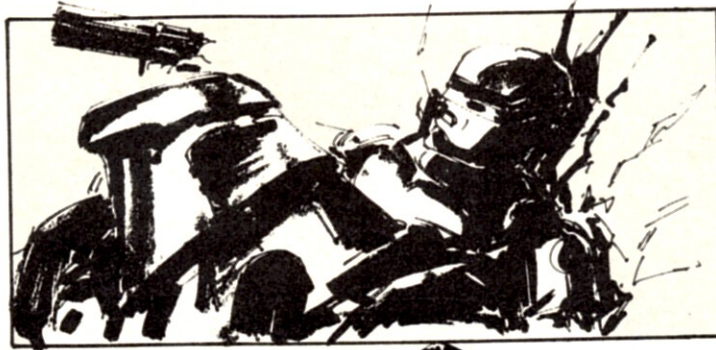
As much as any major crew-member answerable to a director, a producer, and scores of front-office executives, Irwin relies more on his professional judgment than on the dictates of convention. He has eschewed the use of Panaflex cameras in favor of a Moviemax, rejected the standard-issue Steadicam for the smaller, more manageable Kenyon Gyro-Stabilizer (used also on ROBOCOP), and would have opted for Agfa stock had not a bad experience with that brand on a previous Orion picture (one Irwin was not connected with) convinced the executives that, from that time forward, all the company's d.p.s would load up with Kodak.

It would appear Irwin's judgment has served him well, given the distinct look of his credits, including BAT 21, THE BLOB, and David Cronenberg's DEAD ZONE and THE FLY. The depth of experience is certainly no detriment, even if all directors are not equally swayed by it.

"My input, as far as Dave [Cronenberg] is concerned, is just the things I've shot for him," said Irwin. "He hasn't seen anything else I've done. On THE FLY, it took a while to convince him to shoot with anything other than a Panaflex, and to put smoke on a set: 'Why do it? Why would there be smoke on a set?' 'Well, it's atmosphere, it's dust. We're in a warehouse for 13 weeks, let's make it look different.' But David is very straight, very

## PHOTOGRAPHING ROBOCOP 2

**"I never look at the storyboards on the set," said director of photography Mark Irwin. "They're deceiving. The director says, 'Why can't I get this?' Well, use a pencil, that's how you get it."**



RoboCop 2 reaches to grab RoboCop's gun, storyboards by Giacomo Ghiazza.

simple, and the look I was able to bring to his films was dictated by him: the lenses I used, the filters I couldn't use, the smoke I couldn't use, a lot of the angles I couldn't use. Trying to work with other directors, I could expand beyond that. It's like leaving home."

In this case, Irwin has left home to try and bestow the look of humanity upon, as many in the production call it, "a man in a rubber suit." According to Irwin, it's not the easiest task: "I've never dealt with a subject like this, or an object, which is really what RoboCop is. For the new RoboCop, the producer said, 'I want him to look like a new car.' So he's kind of blue and iridescent in places, a very large reflective surface. I have to deal with him in many locations that are not in any way similar to his reflective values. RoboCop can't be lit like a person. All I have is about three inches of face, from below his nose to above his chin, and his mouth—that's it for anything that film sees as skin tone. The rest has to be lit as a car commercial. And what can you do with a new car?"

"At the same time, we're shooting in a sludge plant, in an abandoned steel mill, all

## Frank Miller's Original ROBOCOP 2:

By Dan Persons

An early treatment for ROBOCOP 2 by screenwriter Frank Miller, dated September 15, 1988, called for a more freshly original, harder-hitting sequel than Miller eventually turned in to the development execs at Orion Pictures. The story Miller suggested picks up where the original ROBOCOP ended. Murphy has been reinstated in the beleaguered, OCP-owned police force. Driven half-mad by the conflict between his corporate-installed software and the remnants of his own personality, the cyborg pushed himself into a self-



Frank Miller

destructive, crime-fighting crusade that eventually lands him in the hands of the sadistic, OCP behavioral psychologist, Dr. Margaret ("Call Me Mom") Love.

While the doctor embarks on a program to break Murphy's will, OCP, under the

direction of CEO Julian Faxx, begins a campaign to clear the slums of Old Detroit in preparation for the construction of the corporation's crowning achievement, Delta City. In order to meet their goals, Faxx proposes a two-prong attack: 1) Discredit the small resistance army that is attempting to enlighten the public about the inhumanity of OCP's plans;

2) Introduce a new, improved RoboCop, one with "superior weapons and surveillance systems, and, most importantly, no trace of free will." To achieve the former, a plan is devised to lure the Detroit police into an orchestrated massacre that will then be blamed on the resistance fighters. To achieve the latter, Faxx introduces RoboCop 2, a monstrous cyborg built upon the body of a bull-like, bird-brained drug addict named Kong.

The war is waged. Murphy throws off the yoke of Dr. Love's reprogramming and, along with his partner, Lewis, is won over to the resistance fighters' cause. Love and Faxx expire in a showdown reminiscent of ROBOCOP's climactic

these horrible places," said Irwin. "In these night exteriors, he's surrounded by people wearing dark-blue combat gear, so I have to light them in a certain way with broad sources of light to read, and then still try to get all the other information in. I have scenes with RoboCop and Lewis, and she needs four stops overexposure on her costume and two stops on her face, and then he needs to be lit another way."

Would anything make the situation easier? "If I could do a split screen, I'd be happy."

**R**

OBOCOP 2 ended principal photography in mid-January, 1990. With just some blue-screen shots and a few retakes remaining, Kershner threw himself into post-production: "I'm going to have a very short editing time because I don't need longer—it's all here," he said. "I was cutting in the camera to a great extent."

Now, given the opportunity to look back at the manic atmosphere that surrounded the shoot, Davison, in recounting the day-to-day process by which the film got shot, perhaps involuntarily makes it sound more than a little like Roger Corman redux: "Kersh-



Effects supervisor Phil Tippett, director Irvin Kershner and Vistavision effects cinematographer Rick Fichter film Peter Weller as RoboCop, attempting to draw his gun on rampaging RoboCop 2, pinned against the wall of Houston's Alley Theater.

ner came on in July, and we started shooting the second of October," said Davison. "He was just starting to get a grasp on the material when we started. Because he had so little preparation time, he never had time to sit down and tell the production what he wanted. He would just sort of show up every morning, and he would go, 'Oh, okay, today we're doing this scene. Well, I really

haven't had a chance to think about this scene before. And now that I think about it, it would be nice if we could have this and this and this.' Sometimes we could accommodate it, and sometimes we couldn't.

"You know, the first week of shooting he was very ill," said Davison about Kershner. "I don't know what it was. We were shooting in this horrible location that was filled with

smoke and dirt. It was just a dreadful place—although it looked nice—and he got very ill, and I thought, 'Oh Lord, he's never going to make it through the picture, he's so sick!' By the end of the first week, he was in a wheelchair. After that, there was just no stopping him. He recovered and was a bundle of energy, and really came through with flying colors."

## Toning Down the Noir Vision of Batman's Auteur.



Miller's cover sketch on his early hard-hitting treatment for ROBOCOP 2.

scene. Facing off against RoboCop 2, Murphy defeats his robotic twin and derails the massacre, but not before several policemen have expired, and their deaths are used by OCP as fuel to turn public opinion against the resistance. The story ends as the hastily repaired Murphy emerges from his hideout in an abandoned, Old Detroit warehouse and, climbing into his car, steers toward the firelight of the just-commencing war between the haves and the have-nots.

Miller, the comic book author/artist famed for setting the tone of Tim Burton's *BATMAN* with his graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, brings the same satiric, noir-drenched consciousness to his handling of RoboCop. To

mollify Kong's brain once it is encased inside RoboCop 2, Miller has Faxx generate a text-free RoboVision display of happy-face graphics.

In one riveting, funny/frightening sequence (which may or may not make it to the screen), Dr. Love attempts to break Murphy's will by throwing him into such incongruous situations as a surprise birthday party and a reunion with his estranged wife, all the while overloading his RoboVision with thousands of platitudinous directives ("Disagreement Is Counter-Productive," "Arguments Don't Settle Anything," "Cooperate.")

To drive his message home, Miller bookends his treatment with two OCP commercials: the first, trumpeting the public

confidence in RoboCop, ends with the too-literal slogan, "OCP. Putting People to Work The last, after OCP has successfully turned the citizens of Detroit against the resistance, wraps up with a veiled threat: "OCP. The Only Choice."

In rewrites for Orion, Miller's story idea of Detroit's revolution against its corporate oppressors got more focused on its elements of crime and illicit drug-running, steering closer to the plot of the original ROBOCOP. In the final film, Dr. Love becomes Dr. Faxx. Kong, the dim-witted drug addict, becomes Cain, the cold-hearted drug-lord. Keiko, the resistance's 13-year-old computer wiz, has apparently turned into Hob, Cain's 13-year-old hit man. □

By Davison's calculations, principal photography wrapped two days behind schedule—an impressive showing, by any account. Meeting that goal called for practically non-stop work, with many of the crew cancelling trips home for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The city of Houston welcomed the production, and its much-needed infusion of cash, going all the way to allowing the company to cut a hole in the street for a shot where RoboCop and RoboCop 2 plunge through the roadbed.

That hospitality was not shared by local and national unions, who were unable to organize more than 50% of the ROBOCOP 2 crew. Faced with the largely non-union shoot, Alfred Ditolla, national president of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees, declared ROBOCOP 2 an "unfair production." (Executive producer Pat Crowley defended the policy, telling Scott Norvell of the *Houston Press* that the non-union crew permitted a flexibility in working hours, meal times, and other employee issues not permitted if the shoot had been full-union. He added that the expenses incurred by a fully unionized crew would have lost Houston one of the advantages it had as a production center.)

Not all the publicity surrounding the ROBOCOP 2 shoot has been favorable. The magazine *L.A. Style* published a report depicting the ROBOCOP 2 location as close to a shambles. Weller, it said, was lured back only by a properly impressive sum of money, and had become an absolute tyrant on the set. Prior to the shooting, Allen had spent time with a "color consultant," and was obstinately pressuring Davison and crew to adjust Lewis's wardrobe to fit her expert's recommendations. Kershner was said to see this film as the rebirth of a career that had practically stalled after the release of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, and was testing the patience of all concerned by shooting take after take.

## DESIGNING ROBOCOP 2

**"All the design stuff is just like connecting the dots," said special effects art director Craig Davies. "You look at the script and figure out what's required of you, and then you draw that out."**



Special effects designer Craig Davies and crew hoist the full-scale prop of RoboCop 2. Inset: Davies assembling the jointed wood armature inside the full-size working prop.

While Allen did see a color consultant about a year ago, she dismissed the suggestion that she would try to apply the recommendations to her work in the film. "It's kind of difficult when you're wearing one costume," she laughed. "What can you do but laugh when you read something like that? It was one of those nasty, little things where the truth is twisted to sound badly. There's no truth behind the story—it was a very harmonious set. I think there were certainly very healthy, collaborative sparks going—you know, where people question things. That's the thing that gets you going."

Said Weller about the *L.A. Style* story, "It's garbage. We all thought about writing a collective letter: 'From the cast and crew of ROBOCOP 2.' Kershner didn't delay anything, he's very, very instinctive—he had his mind made up, usually ahead of time. His was a tremendous contribution to the movie. I don't understand what it said about me—that I was getting this money because no one could recognize me

under the mask. So go ask millions of kids that write me if they can recognize me."

Kershner flatly stated that with the scant amount of time given him, the luxury of perfection was one the production could not afford. "There's very little coverage," he said, countering the published story, "I didn't shoot a lot of film at all. You see, if I'd tried to do a lot of coverage, I would never have finished. I would have been 120 days. I had to pretty much lock it in, piece by piece by piece, giving myself an out here and there, a variation, so I wasn't totally locked in. That way, I could finish. If I didn't do that, this would have gone on forever. I never would have gotten each day's work done."



risers aside, none of the hardship has appreciably waylaid the film from Orion's anticipated June 22nd opening, one week after the release of *DICK TRACY* and Verhoeven's *TOTAL RECALL*, and the same day as Joe Dante's

*GREMLINS 2*, a film directed by Davison's friend, who helmed *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD* and *PIRANHA* for Davison when they were both fledgling apprentices of Roger Corman. Davison, however, insisted *ROBOCOP 2* wouldn't be ready to hit theatres until June 29.

Despite the stiff summer competition, the success of the first film and the popularity of RoboCop himself should guarantee an initially strong turn-out. And, given the desires of Davison, Miller, Kershner, and company that this production be more than an attempt to capitalize on what went before, *ROBOCOP 2* at least stands a chance of confounding conventional wisdom, and becoming one of those rare sequels that actually justifies its existence.

As far as a *ROBOCOP 3* is concerned, few involved with the sequel can yet bear to consider the possibility. Ask Weller whether he's signed for the film, and his answer is simple and direct: "Shit no." Ask Allen what she'd like to see Lewis do in the follow-up, and the actress can only joke: "Have a baby and still do her work." Ask Miller if number three has been offered to him to write and his reply is, "We've talked about it, but I really can't go into it."

For Davison, there are far more pressing matters than *ROBOCOP 3*. First up is *DINOSAURS*, a massive, two-year project for Disney, with Paul Verhoeven and Phil Tippett sharing directing honors. After that, possibly, comes a film of *THE SCREWFLY SOLUTION*, a novel by Alice Sheldon (a.k.a. Racoona Sheldon and James Tiptree Jr.), about the destruction of mankind by an alien-bred virus that magnifies man's aggressive genetic characteristics without inhibition. With those major, and more personal, projects in his future, Davison can perhaps be excused for replying, when asked if *ROBOCOP 2* is merely the second act of a trilogy, "I hope not. I hope this will be the end of *ROBOCOP*."

Following June 29, Orion may have other ideas. □

# ROBOCOP 2™

## EFFECTS DESIGN

*Craig Davies came up with the look for Robo's awesome mechanical adversaries.*

By Dan Persons

Craig Davies makes you believe. It isn't just that when you look at ED-209 or RoboCop 2 on the screen you see something that reads as completely plausible: there's something extra . . . something that becomes apparent only when you're on the set and standing maybe five feet away from the full-size mock-ups of these monsters: the sense that what stands before you is nothing less than fully operational. Never do you lose faith that, if you could only find a power switch to flip, these beasts would cold-boot and start stalking yuppies.

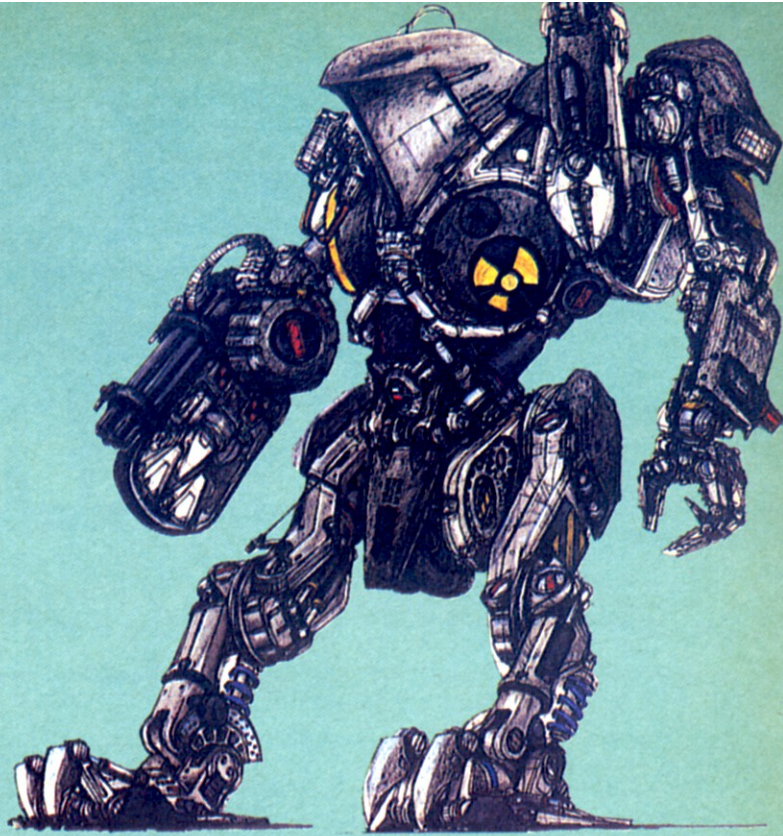
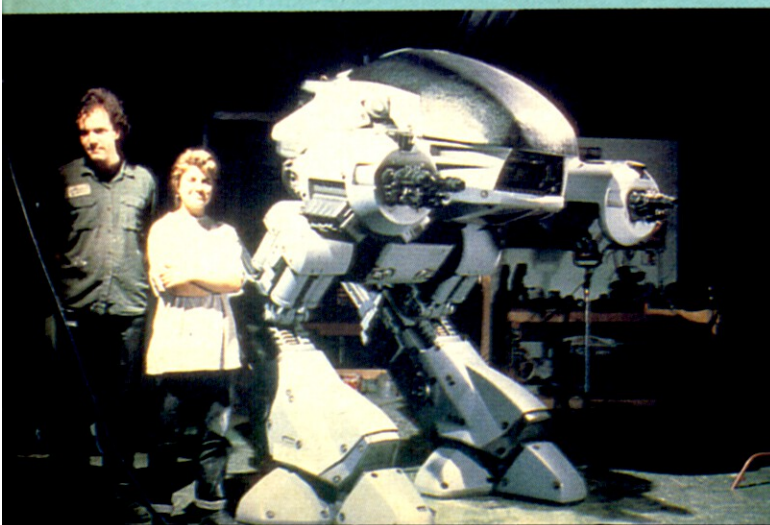
That sense of veracity, even after the floods have dimmed and the camera has ceased to roll, is Davies' stock-in-trade. As effects art director for ROBOCOP 2, he is responsible not only for the design of both ED-209 and RoboCop 2, but for their construction in both full-size and miniature ver-

sions, as well as for the fabrication of the various miniature vehicles and architectural details that animator Phil Tippett needs to complete his setups.

In conversation, Davies is reluctant to talk about himself ("I had a brush with conceptual design school," is the most he'll say about his background). When it comes to describing his participation in the ROBOCOP series—he created ED-209 for the original film—and his design of RoboCop 2, he turns more voluble.

"All the design stuff is just like connecting the dots," he said. "You look at the script and figure out what's required of you and then you draw that out. In [the case of RoboCop 2], the script was unfinished, and in a real early stage, so there were no real definitions for what the monster was. We could fly with it. I just mixed up a lot of elements of modern society and, in particular, the modern American male and put them in a stylized form; so

Davies and assistant Paula Lucchesi with the full-size prop ED-209, built for use on ROBOCOP. Robo's old adversary makes a cameo appearance in the new sequel.



Davies' design for RoboCop 2, a mechanical monstrosity worthy of Frankenstein.

you've got this big, giant monster that's like a lot of different, contemporary icons."

It took approximately four months to build the full-size RoboCop 2, a construction with a steel skeleton and a skin of metallic-looking, vacuum-formed plastic. Members of the Davies shop, located in Phil Tippett's Berkeley studios included Paula Lucchesi, Merrick Cheney, Spencer Owyang, and Mark Ribaud. Stop-motion armatures were designed and built by Tom St. Amand and Blair Clark.

It was up to Davies and crew to build no less than eight identical miniatures of RoboCop 2, in order to accommodate the multiple crews Tippett planned for the production. Standing about 14" when at rest, the aluminum-and-plastic monster is a miracle of design. "I've heard from everybody that it's pretty much the most complicated puppet ever built," said Davies. "It's got four arms, to begin with, and each one of those arms has the full range of joints and movements. Those arms are mounted onto revolving turrets, which spin around 360 degrees. The smaller arms, which are normally folded up, can extend and then rotate so they are in an up position, above the head, while the

bigger arms are hanging down below the waist.

"The mid-section is floating on a network of hydraulic rams—Tom St. Amand put a lot of effort into engineering these little, composite rams that slide smoothly but would also give a very positive feel to the puppet, so the animators could move it where they want and it would stay. The legs have an extra joint between what would be considered our hip and pelvis. There are also three axes of movement at every joint. That means that it can not only swivel and pivot an arm, but it can hinge out to both sides. It's just complicated!"

The complexities of the RoboCop 2 models required Davies and crew to re-think the standard procedure used for constructing miniatures. "Because of the number of robots that were required, and the amount of maintenance that would be required of them, we've made everything as integral as possible," he said. "Sometimes you make a model where you cast something or slosh around some epoxy, or you glue parts onto it. This was approached differently. It's almost like an automobile. Everything can be taken apart and put back together relatively simply." □

# DICK TRACY

## The scoop on Warren Beatty's cinematic ode to the world's most famous dick.

By Sheldon Teitelbaum

John Caglione and Doug Drexler are makeup men with an enormous sense of responsibility. Take the matter of Madonna's breasts in *DICK TRACY*, which Walt Disney opens nationwide June 16. Madonna plays temptress Breathless Mahoney in the film, produced, starring and directed by Warren Beatty, appearing at the beginning performing a Stephen Sondheim number at the Club Ritz. At the end of her routine, the sultry songstress takes a deep bow, revealing an impressive amount of cleavage. So impressive, in fact, that during rehearsals, her breasts sprang free—repeatedly.

Word of this primordial spectacle spread with photonic speed on the set. Prosthetic makeup experts, Caglione and Drexler, who were hard at work within their Winnebago, were among the first to be informed of events. Drexler looked at Caglione and said, "You know, within three minutes, [producer] Barrie [Osborne] is going to storm in here demanding we do something about Madonna's boobs." He was right—Osborne asked that they glue Madonna's breasts to her dress.

They refused. "My contract doesn't say anything about gluing Madonna's tits to her dress," said Caglione. "Yeah," added Drexler, whose wife Donna worked alongside him as his "foam fatale."

"That's a job for wardrobe," he said.

Are these two guys nuts or what!!! "You two are probably the only straight guys on the planet who would turn down such an opportunity," Osborne told them. "In God's name, why?"



Madonna belts out a Stephen Sondheim number as Breathless Mahoney, a scene requiring several retakes when her dress showed more than Disney would allow.

"Look," said Caglione, "Madonna must have the most valuable bust in the business. I'll bet each one of those honeys is worth \$6, maybe \$7 million. What if she has an allergic reaction to the glue? What if we discolor a breast, or inflict some kind of permanent damage? Not only will we be sued—we'll become known as the two schmucks who destroyed a national treasure. People will tear us to pieces in the street."

If only all the production stories behind *DICK TRACY* were this light-hearted. Disney/Touchstone's long-awaited funny papers epic is a film many wanted to make but no one

wished to pay for. Consequently, the project languished in various guises—the most recent of which involved actor/director Beatty—for more than 15 years. According to Dick Sylbert, the distinguished production designer who has been a friend and collaborator of Beatty's for more than 30 years, the actor/director's lengthy association with the project in one facet or another ought not to come as a major surprise. "Warren takes a long time to make up his mind," said Sylbert. "It took us five years to get around to doing *SHAMPOO* [1975] and nine years for *REDS* [1981]. That's just Warren."

Hollywood's bashfulness about *DICK TRACY* is attributable to the property's inordinately high projected costs. Although initially envisioned as a pedestrian live-action detective thriller, no one believed the picture could be done for less than \$50 million. Even before Beatty's ill-fated *ISHTAR* (1987)—when it seemed as if the Oscar-winning and numerous nomi-

nated actor/producer could do no wrong—that was far more than any studio was willing to risk on a comic strip character. Especially one who, unlike Batman or Superman, could not count upon instant name recognition among young movie-goers. Although the Dick Tracy comic strip is still syndicated, the last time a Dick Tracy craze engulfed the country was in 1932.

Older Americans probably recall Chester Gould's original strip, which began syndicated publication in 1931 as "Plainclothes Tracy." They may have listened to the radio serials that ensued during the '30s or seen the films

Warren Beatty  
gun outside  
At the club,





Al Pacino as Chester Gould's gangbusting detective Dick Tracy, taking aim with his Tommy gun at the Club Ritz, the night spot where he meets singer Breathless Mahoney. Below Left: Tracy dining the last supper, gangland style, as hood Big Boy convenes his mob shortly

before Tracy swoops down on them: (l to r) Johnny Ramm, Numbers, Flattop, Pruneface, Big Boy, Texie Garcia, Itchy, Influence and Ribbs Mocca. Below Right: Al Pacino as Big Boy, in makeup by John Caglione and Doug Drexler, fighting Tracy with Madonna as the alluring prize.



# DICK TRACY

## THE COMICS

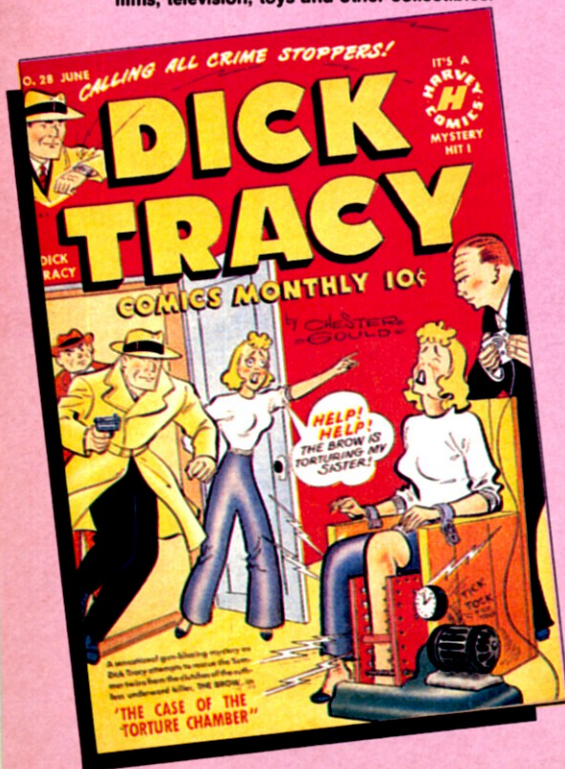
*Chester Gould's newspaper strip changed the medium and stood the test of time.*

By William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* first thrilled newspaper readers back in 1931. In the first daily strip, Tracy, a snappily dressed young man was having dinner with his fiancée, Tess Trueheart, and her parents. Two gunmen broke in, killed Emil Trueheart, stole his life savings, and kidnapped his daughter Tess. Recovering from a blow with brass knuckles the young Tracy was heard to declare "over the body of your Father, Tess, I swear I'll find you and avenge this thing, I swear it."

For over 50 years, as the world's most famous detective, the brilliant, methodical, courageous Tracy has followed the decision he made that night. As a policeman, Tracy has hunted down hundreds of gangsters, con men and murderers who prey on the productive members of society. And the Warren Beatty film is

Tracy to the rescue in an early '50s comic book incarnation, strip merchandising that included radio, films, television, toys and other collectibles.



about to bring Gould's Tracy and his adventures to a new, even wider audience.

Gould's work on *Dick Tracy* is credited with changing the nature of the comic strip. Gag strips had been the most common kind until Tracy became a hit for the Chicago Tribune Syndicate. The few continuing adventure strips of the period, such as *Wash Tubs* and *Tarzan*, were fantasies set in far-off exotic lands.

Tracy often edged into the fantastic but was based firmly on Gould's view of America. Gould used his disgust with prohibition Chicago to create a world where good was just as tough and smart as evil. In his first story Gould used an Al Capone look-a-like, The Big Boy (played by Al Pacino in the new movie version), and a gun moll who resembled Texie Garcia, a noted speakeasy hostess. Gould often used actual cases of the day, restaging the Lindbergh kidnapping, but with a happy ending.

Gould was quite literally a small-town boy who came to the big city to make good. Gould's father had been editor of a newspaper in Stillwater, Oklahoma, but wanted his son to study law. Gould however was determined to make his living as a cartoonist, having won a drawing contest as a child.

A real go-getter, Gould moved to Chicago and worked at several jobs in advertising art, while earning a degree in Commerce and Marketing. Gould also created several comic strips, distributed regionally, such as *The Girl Friends*, *Radio Cats*, and *Fillum Funnies*.

Gould's long-term goal was to sell a strip to Captain Joseph Patterson of the *Chicago Tribune*, who could arrange national distribution. In 1931 Gould sent Patterson another in a series of proposed strips, this one called *Plainclothes Tracy*. Gould only sent a week's worth of art but managed to include a torture scene, a police raid, and ended with a cliffhanger. Patterson telegraphed back saying *Plainclothes Tracy* had possibilities. Patterson sketched out the first story he wanted and changed the strip's name to *Dick Tracy*, Dick being contemporary slang for a police detective. The strip was a huge success.



Gould, in his office at Chicago's Tribune Tower in 1977, shortly before his retirement, holding his Inkpot Award bestowed by San Diego's Comic Con.

Gould had no direct experience with police work when he started the strip, but took law enforcement courses at the University of Chicago. The strip used photography, fingerprints, teletypes, even night sights for guns before they were widely accepted tools.

While the Tracy strip was entirely written by Gould, he had several assistant artists. In 1961 he hired Rick Fletcher, a gun enthusiast, who helped keep Tracy equipped with the best in modern hand weapons. Gould even built a firing range at his mansion outside Chicago. The Tracy strip, by itself, had made him wealthy enough to indulge a little.

It was not until Gould's retirement in 1977 that a second person, mystery author Max Allan Collins, wrote *Dick Tracy*. Collins' connection with the strip dated back to 1956, when, on his eighth birthday, his mother had sent some of his drawings of Tracy to Gould. In Collins' own words "Chet Gould, being the wonderful guy that he is, sent me a letter with a drawing of Dick Tracy saying 'Hello' . . . I credit that one event with really inspiring me to stick with it in the arts."

The Chicago Tribune Syndicate asked Collins to present a sample *Dick Tracy* story and Gould selected him as his successor. Gould acted as a consultant for four years, but by his own choice held no veto over what Collins and Fletcher did.

At the age of 84, Gould passed away in May 1985, before Warren Beatty acquired the rights to give Gould's strip the big budget Hollywood treatment. His daughter, Jean Gould O'Connell was able to visit the set during filming, travelling from Chicago, to see her father's vision brought to big screen life. □

“It was in 1985 that Warren first mentioned the project to me. He said, ‘I’m either going to do DICK TRACY or ISHTAR.’”

— Production designer Richard Sylbert —

produced during the mid-'40s. Their children, however, had grown up on an entirely different pantheon of comic strip stalwarts. Tracy did not have super powers, he lacked the fancy props of a Batman or the adolescent neuroses of Spiderman. When you came down to it, he was just a \$60-a-month gumshoe with a yellow hat and raincoat and an abiding passion for law and order. For color or personality, however, one was possibly better off with the likes of DRAGNET's Joe Friday.

For that matter, it has been almost as long—over a dozen years anyway—since Beatty himself has been a household word. Just as there are generations of Americans alive today who may never have heard of Dick Tracy, at least one generation of Americans would be hard put to recall the actor/director's last broad-based commercial hit—1978's utterly charming fantasy HEAVEN CAN WAIT, a remake of 1941's HERE COMES MR. JORDAN. Beatty's Oscar-winning REDS, though deservedly much acclaimed—not least for Beatty's courage in devoting a film to the life of the founder of the American Communist Party—did not make money and did not boost Beatty's recognizability where it could be counted: at the boxoffice.

Beatty may well be partly to blame for this. He refused to do publicity for REDS and, according to Sylbert, threw a writer for *Premiere* off the hermetically sealed set of DICK TRACY as well (this intrepid writer, however, finally got Beatty to talk about his movie—possibly a first). I tracked down Beatty's home number, only to be told by the clearly recognizable voice of the actor on the other end of the line that I must *surely* have the wrong

number. Calls to Beatty from a close friend imploring him to agree to an interview with *Cinefantastique* were greeted with “Aha, yeah, what else is going on?”

**S**ylbert's earliest recollection of DICK TRACY as a property goes back 16 years, when director Floyd Mutrux and producer Art Linson wrote a script which they and producer/director Michael Laughlin pitched at Paramount. DICK TRACY later went to Universal when Thom Mount ran the studio during the mid-'70s. The project began bouncing from studio to studio, piquing the interests, at various times, of directors like Walter Hill, Richard Benjamin, and John Landis.

Beatty's involvement with DICK TRACY, said Sylbert, dates back about five or six years, when he and Hill began a five-month collaboration to adapt a screenplay by Jim Cash and Jack (TOP GUN) Epps. Although Beatty was initially interested merely in playing Tracy, he eventually became Hill's co-producer, working with him to develop the concept, which essentially pitted Tracy against his various nemeses in gangland Chicago

Beatty, who also served as the film's producer, director and co-writer, lines up a shot on the Universal backlot as cinematographer Vittorio Storaro checks the light.



Warren Beatty as Tracy, fulfilling a childhood fantasy. Right: Tracy leads a raid on a mob hideout in Gould's comic strip which Beatty read as a kid.



during the '20s.

Their efforts were for naught, however—according to Sylbert because of the film's allegedly prohibitive costs—and when Hill went on to other things, the project reverted to Paramount where, under Barry Diller's regime, it lay about, generally inert but intermittently kicking, the butt of terminal skepticism within Paramount of Beatty's ability to turn a profit or come in on budget (the man will spend what he needs if a movie needs it—REDS went from \$17 million to \$34 million). Paramount was allegedly incensed at Beatty's perfectionism, especially in light of what Sylbert characterized as his extreme sluggishness when it came to decision making.

About four years ago, however, Diller went to 20th Centu-

ry-Fox and took with him first-refusal rights to the property. “That was 1985,” recalled Sylbert, “and it was the first time Warren mentioned the project to me. He said, ‘I’m either going to do DICK TRACY or ISHTAR.’”

Fatefully, Sylbert had already signed up as production designer on an abortive early attempt to film THE TWO JAKES. Beatty, who had counted on Sylbert's assistance in making DICK TRACY, as he had on SHAMPOO and REDS, put the film on ice. Beatty's interest in the project variably ran hot and cold, but within the film industry DICK TRACY became widely regarded as Beatty's baby. What few could fathom, however, was *why* Beatty was so intent on delivering it.

To hear Beatty talk back then, DICK TRACY was just a pleasant diversion—a lark he would direct in between two more seriously intended films: one about the “man on the left”—John Reed in REDS—and his antithesis on the right, Howard Hughes. Beatty has been contemplating a film about the late billionaire re-



Madonna as Breathless Mahoney, the bad girl who comes into Tracy's life. Left: The blonde bombshell as she appeared in the Chester Gould comics.



close—whom in some sense he has come to resemble—for 10 years.

ISHTAR was then to have been that bit of puffery that Beatty first considered DICK TRACY—a fun movie to make. But ISHTAR bombed to a degree that shocked and dismayed Beatty. He coped with despondency by playing one of the mind games for which he is famous. He pretended to himself that ISHTAR was merely an aberrant mishap as he continued to consider both the Hughes picture and DICK TRACY—as his next project. Characteristically, Beatty waffled between the two. “At one point,” recalled Sylbert, “he called me up and said, ‘Nah, I’m not going to do DICK TRACY.’” In the end, however, the constellations aligned themselves in such a way that he would have to.

There had been talk, in early 1987, of doing DICK TRACY at Fox, but in the Summer of 1988, Beatty got the go-ahead from Michael Eisner and Jeffrey Katzenberg at Disney, provided he make the film for a

flat \$25 million. For that money, Katzenberg is said to be expecting “the movie of the Summer of 1990.” Beatty undoubtedly poured his own salary back into the picture—even with \$25 million (or \$23 million, according to producer Barrie Osborne) Beatty was probably hard-pressed to complete the film on budget. Disney sources said both amounts were very improbable—some speculated that, like REDS, the film will mount (if it hasn’t already) to more than \$30 million during post-production. Beatty is nothing if not a perfectionist—reportedly he insisted Madonna redo one take on DICK TRACY 25 times (Beatty apparently believes he gets his best, least guarded performances by wearing his actors down.) It is entirely probable, however,

Righteousness vs. the siren call of sex, Beatty as Tracy tries to keep his mind on business when Breathless pays a call in his office, seeking an out from mob life.



“Tracy is a larger than life hero. We had to put him in an environment that was both striking and derivative of the comics.”

— Producer Barrie Osborne —

that at whatever the price, Katzenberg and Eisner will be getting the year’s best bargain—trust Disney to squeeze DICK TRACY for what it’s worth, and then some.

“Disney is making this movie for one reason,” said Sylbert, “merchandising.”

**D**uring the Summer of ’88, Beatty had sought to secure Sylbert’s presence at his side prior to receiving the go-ahead for DICK TRACY by signing him to an as-yet-undetermined project for two years. Sylbert had agreed—if Beatty could conclude a deal within 24 hours—but before the leisurely Beatty got around to finalizing matters, the production designer had signed to do the production design of TEQUILA SUNRISE. Beatty, somewhat upset with his friend, assembled two other long-time associates—director of photography Vittorio Storaro and costume designer Milena Canonero—as well as another production designer to replace the now-unavailable Sylbert. They began to brainstorm DICK TRACY in Beatty’s kitchen at his home on Mulholland Drive.

Some six months later, toward the end of Sylbert’s

involvement with TEQUILA SUNRISE, Beatty and Storaro showed up on the set in Santa Monica. Beatty had been having problems with his production designer—would Sylbert agree to take over after concluding the picture? Yes, said Sylbert—after a much needed three-week vacation.

To fathom Beatty’s actual attraction to the character of Dick Tracy one needs to look at the Cash and Epps script subsequently reworked by Bo (MELVIN AND HOWARD) Goldman and Beatty himself. DICK TRACY, as envisioned by Beatty, is the story of a 39 year-old man (Beatty is in his early 50s) who is not married. He has a girlfriend of many years—Tess Trueheart (Glenn Headly, replacing Sean Young), to whom he once tried proposing. He has no children.

On the night in which the film opens, however, Tracy and Trueheart attend the opera, where they meet up with Junior (Charle Korsmo, who appeared with Jessica Lange in MEN DON’T LEAVE), an orphan boy who inspires deep yearnings of fatherhood in Tracy. The detective is called away on his trademark wrist-radio in mid-performance, however, to raid a gangland nightclub called the Club Ritz. There, Tracy encounters Breathless Mahoney (Madonna), the glamorous moll of gangland leader Big Boy (Al Pacino). A singer armed with lyrics written for her by the acclaimed Stephen Sondheim (an old friend of Beatty’s who contributed three numbers to the film), she becomes Tracy’s temptress.

In one evening, this resolute bachelor not only runs afoul of Big Boy’s plans to bring the city’s criminal elements under his leadership, but also becomes completely confounded emotionally. Within the first 38



Production designer Richard Sylbert (r), producer Barrie Osborne (l) and editor Richard Marks, conferring on creating the film's stylized comic book ambience.

pages of the script, he emerges with two women in his life, and a child as well. That, Beatty's friends maintain, is Warren Beatty. The man has never been married, has no children, has a lot of women in his life and is always emotionally conflicted. "Warren knows that conflict makes drama," said Sylbert. "At the emotional level, he knows exactly what Tracy's story is."

The hard part was making it into something special. A movie about a guy in a yellow raincoat walking around Chicago just wasn't going to cut it. "We realized we were dealing with an American icon," said Barrie Osborne, who came aboard as producer in September 1988 after Disney gave Beatty the green light. "Tracy is a larger than life hero. We had to put him in an environment that was both striking and derivative of comics." Preproduction for DICK TRACY had begun in June 1988, with shooting scheduled to begin February 2, 1989. The shoot lasted three months, concluded just two days over schedule, and was followed by several months of post-production.

Beatty and company began by establishing Tracy in time. The Cash and Epps script had set the story in 1928. Milena Canonero, who had just worked with Sylbert on THE COTTON CLUB, insisted that the period be changed. "Warren, we just did this movie," Sylbert said he told Beatty. "THE COTTON CLUB was a movie

about a gangland nightclub and a gangster's moll who sings. We don't want to do it again." They decided, instead, to set the film in 1938. This way, said Sylbert, they could achieve a generic '30s look without rubbing up against wartime realities of Hitler's 1939 invasion of Poland.

Canonero, who had worked on Stanley Kubrick's A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and won an Oscar for her costumes on BARRY LYNDON, soon found herself at variance with Sylbert, who insisted that one should not recreate 1938 so much as filter it through the prism of 1990 sensibilities. Canonero had no intention of mimicking Gould's comic fashions verbatim—they were too one dimensional for that. But neither was she prepared to render a present-day interpretation of 1938 fashions, believing that to be a cheat. Working in her favor was the fact that in 1938, fashions were shifting. Hemlines were creeping up, shoulders were broadening out, and hairstyles were transforming. Locating her staff in the drawing rooms of the Western Costume Company in Hollywood, she set about creating her hybrid look.

After scouting actual locations in Chicago, Beatty, Sylbert, Storaro, and Canonero hit upon the idea behind the picture's stylized production design. What eventually occurred to the filmmakers was that Dick Tracy was decidedly not

# THE COMICS

*Gould's Dick Tracy has remained an heroic enigma.*

*By William Wilson Goodson, Jr.*

The most important element of Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy* comic strip was the pacing. There was a crime, a chase, and then satisfying retribution. Gould spent a good deal of time developing the character of each villain, but he never glamorized them, and always gave the reader the satisfaction of seeing them hauled off to jail or die an ironic death.

Gould gave his pantheon of villains names to match their character. Among the first of Tracy's grotesque adversaries was Frank Redrum, a character name Gould devised as an anagram for "Murder." Redrum was called the Blank because he wore a featureless mask, while seeking vengeance on the companions who had betrayed him. BB-Eyes had small piercing eyes, while master spy Pruneface was a mass of wrinkles. Shakey never did learn how to calm down without killing someone.

In a 1957 survey of 121 male workers of low social status, it was found people had very definite ideas about Gould's strip. The readers liked it for suspense, mystery, and because they knew justice would finally prevail. The strip appealed most to those who felt powerless in the real world, and needed a dose of reassuring fantasy.

Oddly, few people taking part in the survey actually identified themselves with Tracy. This may be because Tracy's personal life seldom intruded on the strip. We know nothing about him

before he became a policeman, nor where he trained as a detective. He was inducted directly into the plainclothes division without serving as a patrolman. It took 18 years for him to marry Tess Trueheart, and their first child, Bonnie Braids, was not born until 1951.

Tracy has had only three partners. At first he worked with Pat Patton directly under Chief-of-Police Brandon. Despite Pat sometimes being used as a comic foil, he became the police chief in December 1948. Tracy then teamed up with the highly experienced Sam Catchem, one of the first Jewish characters in a weekly strip.

Since 1955 Sam and Dick have worked regularly with Lizz, a policewoman. Other semi-regulars include policewomen, Lee Ebony, a young black, and Groovy Grove, a rookie. □

Gould's Tracy and Chief Brandon. The newspaper strip first appeared as a comic book in 1949, from Dell.





Glenna Headly as Tess Trueheart, the home and hearth vertex of the film's love triangle, facing Tracy, her true love: Left: Gould's comic strip couple.



of this universe. Any attempts at draping him in reality would be ludicrous because the whole concept of Tracy, as perceived by Gould, was ludicrous. This was a man of heroic stature who kept order in a dank and corrupt city whose criminal inhabitants were physically disfigured by their own criminal natures. This was not, to mention another dick in a raincoat, *COLUMBO*. To make their hero come alive, the filmmakers needed to create an alternate reality—one half-removed from our own—within which to stage the full comic strip spectacle of Gould's Tracy.

To do this, Sylbert realized, he and his colleagues would have to unlearn everything they had ever learned about making a movie. "We gave up everything we knew except our taste," said Sylbert. "It was horrendous. When you let go of one trapeze bar and you haven't got to the other one—that space can be terrifying."

Sylbert's increasingly stripped-down brand of comic book reality also demanded set detailing be kept to a bare

minimum. Walls would not have paintings, furniture would not be adorned with what Sylbert called 'clotchkes'—knick-knacks.

"I had done this once before, in *CARNAL KNOWLEDGE*," he recalled. "That movie was about memory during three periods, and I knew that you remembered a room, not a picture. In *DICK TRACY* you can't have props that are personal. You can't focus on the scenery. You could have a switchbox on the wall because that is a permanent fixture. But nothing else."

Taking a stylized approach meant that Gould's bizarre cast of supporting characters—with names like Pruneface and Flattop—could be rendered in all their prosthetic glory. Makeup artists Caglione and Drexler, both of them from New York, had been hearing about *DICK TRACY* for years, mostly from costume designer Canonero, with whom they had worked for seven months on *THE COTTON CLUB*. The two of them were flown in to meet Beatty, who purportedly emerged from a shower and, still dripping, asked them what they thought.

"About what," asked Drexler. "You mean makeupwise?"

No, said Beatty—about the script.

Caglione and Drexler—both of whom had been up half the night going over the script

**“You can't take a man with a yellow raincoat being chased by a man with a flat top and a prune face and set them in Chicago.”**

— Production designer Richard Sylbert —

and contemplating a prosthetics budget (they ultimately agreed to do the job for \$750,000 and said they came in considerably under budget), were flabbergasted. No director had ever asked them what they thought of a script before. Apparently, Beatty liked what they had to say, because they got the job at a time, they said, when their careers had taken somewhat of a turn for the worse. "It's always feast or famine in this business," said Drexler. "Yeah," added Caglione, "we try and stay away from the real gory stuff, but sometimes it isn't that easy."

**W**ith stylization the key to realizing *DICK TRACY*, Sylbert now knew that the only way to recreate Gould's world within the limits of Beatty's budget was to film it on a studio backlot. For Sylbert, who never liked the backlot look, this was heady—and frightening—stuff. Neither Sylbert nor his colleagues had ever created a fantasy world from scratch. Sylbert wanted a generic industrial American city of the pre-war period, he said, in which Gould's Tracy could leave his footprints. Beatty's film needed an archi-

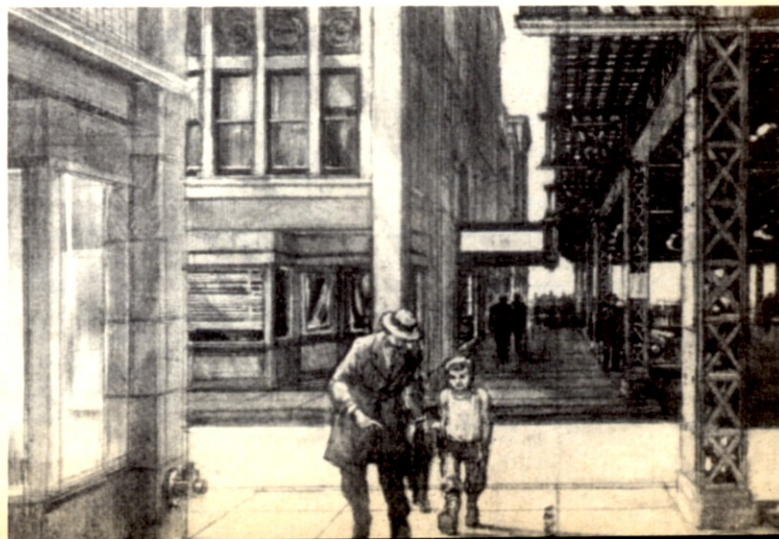
tectural scheme that clearly delineated a comic strip battle between good and evil, and that lacked any ambiguity.

Sylbert accompanied Beatty to Universal, one of the last remaining bastions of Hollywood's legendary backlots and drove home the fact that none of them really had any choice in the matter. Universal's backlot posed problems of its own, notably the urban exteriors, like the New York Street, weren't terribly high or imposing. Sylbert called them "half-sized worlds." In keeping with his quest for a generic look, Sylbert realized that he'd have to work with mattes far more extensively than Tim Burton had on *BATMAN*. Rather than affording the film with the look of reality, they would *become* the look of the film.

Unfortunately, Sylbert had rarely worked with mattes before. "My experience with mattes in 44 years in pictures was one. Warren's was two—on *ISHTAR*. Vittorio's was two. We ended up doing 64."

Sylbert was forced to involve himself in the actual design of mattes far more than was typical for most set designers. "Normally a company like Boss Films contracts to make the mattes," said Sylbert. "I couldn't do that, though,

Richard Sylbert's production design for a "Tracy Town" matte shot.





# PRODUCTION DESIGN

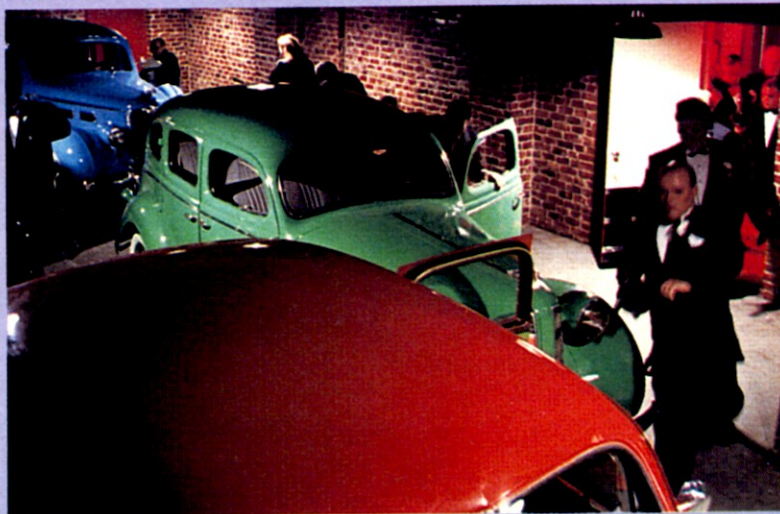
*In a design tour de force, the film literally transfers the comics medium to the big screen on an unprecedented scale.*

*By Sheldon Teitelbaum*

Finding a real-world setting for DICK TRACY would have been difficult, but producer/director/star Warren Beatty and production designer Richard Sylbert ultimately decided to head in the opposite direction: extreme stylization was the key to realizing Tracy's world.

"You can't take a man with a yellow raincoat being chased by a man with a flat top and a prune face and set them in Chicago," explained Sylbert. "It's a joke." In fact, Sylbert, Beatty, costume designer Milena Canonero and cinematographer Vittorio Storaro travelled to Chicago early on to scout locations. Sylbert said they found marvelous places to shoot the movie. "And it would have been stunning. But it wouldn't have been DICK TRACY."

Instead Beatty and Sylbert decided to shoot the movie entirely on the backlot of Universal to create a colorfully



Designer Richard Sylbert used seven "Tracy colors" to give the film a comics look.

stylized comic book look on a grand scale. In keeping with their pursuit of generic simplicity, they decided to restrict themselves—to the extent possible—to a limited palette of comic book colors; notably orange, blue, green, red, plum, fuchsia, cyan, and, of course, black and white.

After viewing rushes of test footage, Sylbert—like one of the Queen's playing cards in

Alice in Wonderland—began painting the cinematic roses red. Nothing on the backlot sets escaped his paint brush—not even the asphalt roads or the cars parked on them—big ones for the good guys, bigger ones for the villains, and a magenta speedster for Madonna.

The search for generic cars posed a challenge of its own. A national search turned up a fleet of '36 Fords for police cars. Tracy's was a five-door Ford coupe. The criminals were given flashy Chevys and Chryslers. Al Pacino, who played Big Boy, drove a '38 Cadillac Limo. Many of these cars were virtually rebuilt, with the stunt cars given new engines, and others provided with grilles, windshields, and other accouterments.

Along the way, Sylbert and Canonero found themselves pushing color coordination even farther by basing the costume colors on the same color scheme as well—especially if

one of the characters dominated the scene. For instance, if Dick Tracy were in the room, his brand of yellow would wander about the set, appearing in a flower pot or wall color or countertop. To coordinate this restrictive yet allegedly invigorating use of colors, Sylbert and his crew resorted to carrying around pieces of colored fabric that would be used in the various costumes. These became "Tracy colors."

The end result is a *tour de force* of production design; whereas last season's BATMAN spruced up a *noir* setting with a few baroque matte paintings, DICK TRACY literally transfers the comics medium to the screen on an unprecedented scale. □

The Blank, a dark, mysterious figure without a face; comics design realized in sets, costumes and cinematography.



The effect, Beatty and Charlie Korsmo as The Kid, filmed on the Universal lot.



because of the extent of my involvement in set design.”

Sylbert started by designing about a dozen early sketches in charcoal and ink. These were delivered to a production illustrator, whose job was to produce layouts ready for blueprint design. These layouts, said Sylbert, had to be especially daring because of the extent to which the mattes would dominate the external shots, most of which took place at night. A good number of these mattes would be only 20% live action—the lower right-hand corner might be real—everything else in the shot was bogus.

Unfortunately, the Disney artists Sylbert said he was saddled with weren't up to snuff. “I remember the first three or four colored renderings that had come in, and I said ‘Warren, my original sketch and Leon's [production illustrator Leon Harris, an old colleague] is better than these mattes. This matte should be 10 times better than my original.’ Warren got angry and said, ‘Yeah but this little part is better.’ I said, ‘Yeah, but that's just a little part of it. What about the rest?’”

“This production required the same courage among the matte people that went into directing, designing and lighting *DICK TRACY*,” said Sylbert. “It required people who

Tony Epper as skid row bum Steve the Tramp, one of the elaborate prosthetic makeups by Caglione and Drexler.



## MAKEUP DESIGN

*Dick Smith proteges John Caglione and Doug Drexler designed the prosthetic villains.*

*By Sheldon Teitelbaum*

New York-based makeup supervisors John Caglione and Doug Drexler were hired by Warren Beatty to transfer Chester Gould's grotesque comic characters from the printed page to the screen. Caglione and Drexler—both of them Dick Smith proteges (Drexler assisted Smith in aging David Bowie as a vampire in *THE HUNGER*)—cut their prosthetic teeth on such films as *ALTERED STATES*, *FX*, *MAKING MR. RIGHT*, *ZELIG*, and, most recently, *THE COTTON CLUB*. To this day, neither can quite believe their good fortune at landing what, in more ways than one, was a makeup artist's dream.

“There were a lot of people bidding on this job,” recounted Drexler. And no wonder. With the exception of Beatty as Tracy, and his sidekicks, Madonna as Breathless Mahoney, and Glenn Headly as Tess Trueheart—Beatty called them the “feeling” characters—almost everyone in the production wore some kind of prosthetic makeup. At first Beatty himself was said to be intent upon wearing makeup appliances that would afford him the hawk-nosed, square-jawed Tracy that cartoonist Gould had drawn. Caglione and Drexler thought that was a bad idea for several reasons.

“For one thing,” said Drexler, “if Warren wore prosthetics, then everybody in the picture would have to wear them, and the budget would go through the roof. Also, Warren had



New York makeup artists Caglione (l) and Drexler.

enough to do as producer, director, and actor. He didn't need to go through a couple of hours in the chair every morning.”

“And anyway,” added Caglione, “we felt there was a good story reason to have him that way—he was the actor, the one normal element in the story.”

Unlike the bulbous rubber nose they affixed to Dutch Schultz in *THE COTTON CLUB*, there were no ordinary prosthetics called for in *DICK TRACY*. Often, the only physical attribute of the original actors still visible on the screen were their eyes. This was the case, for instance, with Tony Epper, who played Steve the Tramp, replete with deeply wrinkled face and forehead, an enormous, jutting jaw, huge lips and cauliflower ears. Epper's mouth was encased in so much rubber, in fact, that eating chicken, which he was called on to do in one scene, became a serious problem. Epper was forced to contort his face grotesquely in order to animate his facial prosthetics.

Caglione and Drexler were called on to bring alive characters like Little Face, Stogie and Shoulders, each one more grotesque than the next. In the case of “The Blank,” a character who appeared in the origi-

nal comics with a featureless mask but who, in this film, possesses a completely blank countenance, not even the eyes remained.

The makeup artists were working on a TV film in Montreal when they learned from *DICK TRACY* production manager John Landau that Beatty had chosen them over virtually every makeup effects house in the country. Neither is entirely sure why. “Beatty knew we'd both be so grateful for the opportunity that we'd be the first to shoot off warning flares if there were a problem,” said Drexler.

The partners flew out to Los Angeles “with the shirts on our back,” said Caglione, and began drawing fuller, more detailed characters than Gould had ever inked in his comic book. Some 80% of the characters in the film, said Caglione, were culled directly from the comic strip. Even when they invented their own characters, they were careful, they said, to stay true to the spirit of Gould's work.

“I think we were more devoted to Gould's vision, in fact,” said Drexler, “than any other department. The idea was to devise characters who were half a turn of the screw off of reality. We wanted characters who, if they went out in the street, would not stop traffic. People would look at them, but they wouldn't gawk.”

“We had a scale of weird for the prosthetics,” said Caglione, “with Al Pacino's Big Boy on one hand and Pruneface on the other.” Unlike the matte artists, who didn't mind if people knew right off that they





R. G. Armstrong as Pruneface in a prosthetic makeup design by Caglione and Drexler. Left: The character in Gould's Sunday newspaper comic strip.

were looking at mattes, Caglione and Drexler wanted their work to be as seamless as possible. "We wanted to defy the imagination of the audience," said Drexler. "People would be changed and you couldn't place it."

The makeup artists became involved in casting the film's villains mainly because of the extent of the makeup they were expected to apply to them. They attended a casting call at a church in Hollywood, where they shot scores of polaroids in their search for the appropriate faces. They claim they chose actors who had some feature which suggested the characters they would become. Ed O'Ross, for instance, struck them as the ideal Itchy the moment they laid eyes on him. Neil Summers—the Rodent—had the requisite rodent-like look, and R.G. Armstrong struck them as a natural to play Pruneface.

"This was our first taste of real power," recalled Caglione. "It was very heady."

Different people reacted

with varying degrees of distaste to the ordeal they were put through each day while having makeup applied. Actor Bill Forsythe, for instance, greeted the prospect of spending hours each day having 14 separate appliances glued to his head and face with the aplomb of someone having their thumbnails snatched out. He went through this for 50 days of shooting, and by the end of the production, quipped Drexler, "there were maybe 50 dents in our Winnebago."

Al Pacino, on the other hand, had a grand time of it. Pacino did not want, recalled Drexler, to look like Chester Gould's Big Boy. In fact, he



Dustin Hoffman as Mumbles, made-up by Caglione and Drexler the morning after winning an Oscar for RAIN MAN.

demanded a hand in designing his look. "He started mixing and matching different generic appliances we had on hand like he was Mr. Potatohead," said Drexler. "John and I looked at each other and said, 'Jeez—he loves it!'"

The makeup, it soon became apparent, helped Pacino get into character. He'd doze off in his chair as they worked their transformation, and when he awoke, said Caglione, "he'd be Big Boy. I mean, you'd see him playing chess with people on the set and he was Big Boy. And he'd stay in character all day, until we took the prosthetics off of him. It was really weird."

Although they came from New York, the two makeup artists were newcomers to Hollywood, and sometimes felt like hicks, particularly when it came to working with the stars. For instance, they were called upon to make over the likes of Dustin Hoffman and James Caan. "I mean, God," exclaimed Caglione, "these people were giants." Hoffman had come to the set of DICK TRACY the day after winning an Academy award for his performance in RAIN MAN, and they were nervous because they had not had time to test the makeup that would be used in a shot that day.

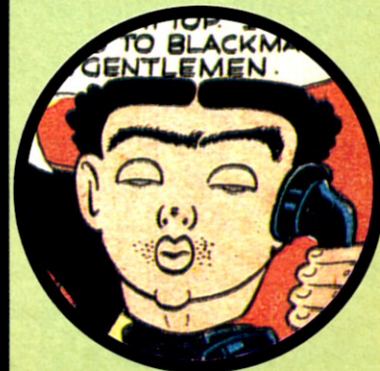
Hoffman, who plays Mumbles, was fitted with lips that twisted to the side of his mouth, brow covers, a bald cap and tufts of blond hair. Hoffman liked what he saw. He told them, in fact, that had they been given more time to work on him, they might not have done such a good job.

Caglione and Drexler were

largely spared the bottlenecks experienced by the visual effects crew on DICK TRACY. They claim they were always encouraged by Beatty to take chances. Storaro, however, was another matter. There were blowouts over lighting attributable, recalled Drexler (who would not call them "blowouts") to Storaro's lack of experience shooting prosthetics.

Storaro apparently caught on, because Drexler and Caglione attended dailies of a scene involving card players at the beginning of the film and they were astounded at the quality of the shots. The masks were rich and warm and alive. "John got up and said [to Storaro], 'Can I hug you?'" recounted Drexler. "And he did, in front of everyone." □

Bill Forsythe as Flattop (left) and the Gould comic strip inspiration (below). The film's makeups bear the greatest fidelity to Gould's original characters.





## SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

*Matte painter Harrison Ellenshaw on devising the optical tricks necessary to realize Beatty's Tracy Town on the screen.*

*By Sheldon Teitelbaum*

DICK TRACY features only 70 special visual effects shots, but each was far more complex and contained a greater number of elements than most visuals. The matte paintings provided by visual effects co-supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw had to be highly detailed, because the camera would linger on them.

"The compositing is more difficult," said Ellenshaw, who shared the responsibility for DICK TRACY's effects work with Michael Lloyd. "Because this is a high-profile show, you want every matte to be perfect."

There would be no doubting that these were matte paintings—the idea was to recreate the comic book ambiance of Chester Gould's universe. The first matte, for instance, which was called "M-1," showed Tracy's city in the last moments of day in wild splashes of color, putting the viewer smack into the film's comic book look. But gaffes would surely be noticed.

"That's really one of the things that appealed to me,"

Effects co-supervisor Ellenshaw.



Beatty's Tracy in his element, a sodium screen matte supervised by Ellenshaw and Michael Lloyd.

said Ellenshaw about the assignment. "There is no attempt to make this seamless, but rather grand and glorious, very stylized. Every effects shot had a matte painting—even the traveling matte shots. With one exception, they are all exteriors."

Mattes were used so extensively because the film was shot on the Universal backlot. There was simply no city in existence that could afford the film the correct comic book look. The backlot building facades enabled the effects crew to blow up the city into skyscrapers and other post-expressionist urban features. Ellenshaw and crew took to calling the city they had devised "Tracy Town"—a reference to Robert Zemeckis' "Toon Town" in WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?

For the film's traveling

mattes, of which there were more than about twenty-five, Ellenshaw and Lloyd resorted to an old Disney standby—the sodium screen process. Used extensively in the '50s, '60s, and early '70s, the technique had fallen out of use because of advances in blue screen technology. The process uses sodium vapor lamps which illuminate a yellow screen. For DICK TRACY, the process had some clear advantages, notably the ability to permit the use of virtually any color costume or lighting. Thus, in a shot of Tracy and his stalwart girlfriend Tess Trueheart attending the opera at the start of the film, it was possible to depict Tracy, in his yellow hat and raincoat, against the backdrop of the blue-lit opera stage.

"In the finished product," said Ellenshaw, "blue screen

and sodium are indistinguishable. Whereas the sodium process makes the holdout matte inside the camera—it runs two pieces of film, in blue screen you make the holdout matte on an optical printer. Sodium, however, can matte out very fine hairs better than blue screen."

Although Beatty insisted that so-called "Tracy colors" be used in all interior and exterior shots, Ellenshaw said that he and fellow matte artists Paul Laisaine, Tom Gilleon, Michelle Moen, and Lucy Tanashian were forced, on occasion, to take their share of

liberties.

"The philosophy was if there is a red in a shot, all the reds should be the same," said Ellenshaw. "But you'll notice that Madonna drives a lavender magenta speedster—this is not technically a Tracy color. We weren't always limited to a certain palette. We tried, rather, to get saturated colors into the matte painting. The same is true, for that matter, of non-matte exteriors. There are places where the road is lit with red light without a source."

DICK TRACY effects also involved a number of miniatures—notably a miniature train, boat, gearhouse, and drawbridge. The train, Ellenshaw recalled, wasn't so miniature. "That was one big sucker," he said. In fact, it was a steam train obtained by modelmaker Mark Stetson (of Stetson Vis-

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**“Then the fights started about money. But Warren is wonderful with problems because he’s tough. Disney had to eat the cookie.”**

*— Production designer Richard Sylbert —*

are the best there are. But that’s not what we had in matts. On REDS, we had a vehicle of four wheels—costumes, director, sets and photography. On DICK TRACY we had a fifth wheel that was flat. I had never been in the position where something so important was so poorly done. Then the fights started about money. But Warren is wonderful with these problems because he’s tough. In the end, Disney had to eat the cookie.”

**A**fter prolonged negotiations, visual effects for DICK TRACY had been farmed out—or rather, in—to Michael Lloyd’s Buena Vista Visual Effects Group, Disney’s in-house effects ensemble. For Betty’s Mulholland Productions, which co-produced the film, it made eminent sense to render Disney answerable for the film’s visuals rather than turn to independent contractors. Effects houses, these days, are only slightly more popular in this country than deposed Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega—producers gripe endlessly that they charge outlandish rates, produce mediocre work, and rarely surpass the expectations of a by-now jaded film-going audience more prone to “ooh and aah” strong writing than impressive visuals.

Buena Vista, which under Lloyd had done the visual effects for OUR TRAGEOUS FORTUNE and SPLASH, was—by virtue of its niche within the Disney organization—beholden to Disney’s, and therefore to Mulholland’s bottom line. “We took Disney,” said Sylbert, “because it was the cheapest deal. We gave them drawings, and they could bid on each matte. Every one. We talked to everyone, and

they gave us the cheapest price around.”

Moreover, it became possible to impose upon Lloyd and his crew a work regimen other independent effects houses might not have accepted. Betty wanted approval for very nearly every brush stroke and every shade of virtually every matte painting and visual at every stage of the creative process. And if there weren’t enough such stages, he added some of his own for good measure.

Indeed, the reason it took so long to negotiate a deal between Mulholland and Buena Vista—and why competing effects artists like Harrison Ellenshaw, who had painted matts on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, TRON, and CAPTAIN EO, were rejected when they bid on the show—was that Betty demanded greater depth of input, and a greater degree of control over the effects process, than was the norm even among the most exacting directors.

“George [Lucas] was no less a perfectionist,” said Ellenshaw, who eventually got to work with Betty on DICK TRACY, “but once you had been given an assignment he let you run with it.”

To his credit, Betty also

On his way to meet Tess Trueheart (Glenn Headly), Tracy bumps into Junior, (Charlie Korsmo), called simply The Kid in the film, caught stealing a man’s watch.



Nine year-old Charlie Korsmo as Junior, the street kid that the paternal Tracy takes under his wing. Right: The character as drawn by Chester Gould.



demanded more input from Lloyd into the overall filmmaking process than he or most effects people were used to giving. The director sought Lloyd’s advice on a broad palette of issues not normally the domain of visual effects personnel. “Michael [Lloyd] interacted with design,” said Ellenshaw. “He had a lot of design input with Sylbert. In preproduction and production, it’s my understanding he went way beyond the normal capacity of a visual effects supervisor.” But the net effect of this apparent aesthetic largess was to create an effects bottleneck of major proportions. “It backfired on us,” said Sylbert.

Late in 1988, some 16 weeks before the coming year’s “drop-dead” date of February 2, when all 70 effects shots incorporat-

ing some 55 extraordinarily detailed matte paintings were supposed to be in the can (the studio promised to pull the plug if this deadline was not met), virtually none of the final effects or even first trials—shots composited with all the elements that would be required for a final shot—had been shipped to Mulholland. In fact, only 30 to 40% of the temps—rough paintings and live-action plates—had been completed.

Enter Ellenshaw, who had regarded DICK TRACY as a plum from the start because of the prominence his work would achieve no matter what kind of a film it turned out to be. DICK TRACY was a production, he knew, which did not attempt to hide the seams between live action and matts, between makeup prosthetics and human flesh, between film and reality. Rather, it celebrated each of these elements with an aplomb seldom adopted by filmmakers. Whether the firm proved to be the peacock many envisioned or the turkey some feared, Ellenshaw knew DICK TRACY would provide



Al Pacino as Big Boy reacts with glee to a pile of illicit cash dumped on his desk by Numbers (James Tolkin). Left: Big Boy in Gould's first Tracy strip.



a measure of exposure seldom afforded matte artists.

Ellenshaw was called in to assist Lloyd 20 weeks before the drop-dead date assigned by Disney. His budget, he learned, was \$2 million. "That's pretty much the best bargain in town," he said. His first job, however, was not to spend money, but to ascertain whether the date was bogus or whether Disney would indeed pull the plug.

"False deadlines are pretty deadly, so the first thing I did was find out if it would stick," said Ellenshaw. "I had only once before worked on a show with a real false deadline. It's hard to convince people its not bullshit. But I had to take it seriously. If Disney felt this could go on forever, they might have been inclined to cut in the stuff they had in hand and call it quits. That was my biggest fear, and it motivated me to get everybody's best shot."

Ellenshaw's first move was to relieve Lloyd of much of his administrative burden. "Michael's creativity," he explained, "was needed far more at this stage." Ellenshaw began, he

recounted, by rearranging the overly ambitious schedule Lloyd had instituted. Instead of making shots due on Friday, for instance, he designated Monday as the weekly deadline, thereby earning three extra days—the weekend—of shooting time.

Mostly, however, Ellenshaw saw to it that the effects effort was focused. "I've had to deal with shows with a great number of effects," he explained. "SUPERMAN IV, whatever you might want to say about the movie, had 600 effects shots. TRON had over 1,000. You can't dig at the mountain with a spoon blindly. Everybody has to dig in more or less the same hole."

Perhaps the biggest challenge, said Ellenshaw, was finding a way to work within the confines of the production

Tracy is taken for a ride to see Big Boy, flanked by Flattop (Bill Forsythe) and Numbers. Beatty sought to make the film an archetypal parable of good and evil.



**“ We wondered if Michelangelo had to wait for the Pope to give permission for every brushstroke in painting the Sistine Chapel. ”**

**- Matte painter Harrison Ellenshaw -**

organization Beatty had instituted. "This whole approval thing was the most difficult aspect I had to deal with," he said. "We often wondered if Michelangelo had to wait for the Pope to give permission for every brush stroke while painting the Sistine Chapel. It's sort of like writing an article and having it sent back for incessant rewrites. In Hollywood, of course, that's normal. Here, however, they would ask for an outline after you had written the script. So you'd say, 'I don't write using outlines,' and they'd say, 'well, we need you to do one.'"

"At one point before I came on, they took illustrations and inserted them with live action and called it a 'color temp composite.' Who ever heard of such a thing? I'm surprised there wasn't an approval sheet for what paint colors would be used."

At other times, said Ellenshaw, he would send effects to editor Richard Marks because Beatty was too busy to get to them. Marks might approve them, only to have Beatty later overturn his approval, or insist on changes which, again, Beatty might or might not like. Consequently, it became nearly impossible to work up a momentum within the effects

department. Nothing ever got finished.

"Whether such a system works to everyone's advantage is debatable," said Ellenshaw. "We were always stuck in the middle. I don't particularly like it. I don't think that's the way to work. At a certain point you lose a little of the flow."

**F**or the comic book setting Sylbert had created, lighting became a crucial factor. It wasn't enough to use a smattering of comic book colors—these would have to be souped up by the interplay of light and shadow. Especially since Beatty was not known as a fancy director. He did not like to make his presence felt through his camera work, and in DICK TRACY, because of the matte work, the camera would have to remain stationary during most scenes. The job of enhancing them fell to director of photography Vittorio Storaro, a long-time Beatty associate who had been mulling over the business of lighting this film, recalled Sylbert, for years.

Storaro had begun his foray into the universe of Chester Gould in a roundabout fashion. Beatty had suggested, at the outset, that Storaro take his cues from Bertold Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*. Eager to achieve a suitable Post-Expressionistic look, he then studied the painters of the '30s. Storaro became especially enamored of painters Otto Dix, Conrad Muller, and George Grosz. Their work seemed to suggest the sense of madness and corruption, of confrontation and divisiveness of the period. Eventually, Storaro realized that all of these qualities were already present in Gould's renderings. DICK TRACY was quintessentially Post-Expressionist in its exter-



Madonna as Breathless Mahoney offers Beatty's Tracy what Tess Trueheart cannot. Pre-release publicity has focused on Beatty's off-screen romance with Madonna.

nalization of human depravity.

Sometimes—although this may be lost on casual viewers—the film's colors are used to symbolic effect. Big Boy Caprice, according to producer Osborne, was conceived as a cross between Adolph Hitler and Groucho Marx—"a poetry-spouting Nazi Knucklehead" is how he described him. His conference room was consequently painted red and black—the colors of the Third Reich's flag and emblems. A gearhouse, meanwhile, became a German Post-Expressionist torture chamber.

Storaro, who had won an Academy Award for REDS, achieved, by all accounts, notably striking effects lighting the already colorful sets of DICK TRACY. For one thing, Storaro did not feel himself bound by conventional sources of light. Some streets might be bathed in milky whites. Colored gels afforded building windows with their own unique translucence. Violet streets might contain pink rain puddles.

At first, Storaro insisted on shooting Caglione and Drexler's prosthetically-enhanced actors in harsh lights which would not bring out the warm tones the painted latex needed to be convincing. The blue light Storaro wanted would have undermined attempts by the makeup designers to make the prosthetics look like natural skin. But Storaro, who had been contemplating the lighting of DICK TRACY for

years, held to his intent stubbornly until, Caglione recalled, "at one meeting you could see a light pop on in his head."

"We said, this is a camera trick," recalled Caglione. "We are tricking the camera to believe this is skin. The lighting has to help. The camera department has to get into the act." "We had to shoot these people like a centerfold," added Drexler. In the end, Storaro made the makeup artists look good.

Eventually, however, Storaro drove everyone crazy with his elaborate ideological peregrinations regarding the use and meaning of colors and shadows. DICK TRACY became a battle between warm and cold colors. Tracy became the sun. Big Boy Caprice, who wore blue, was the moon. Junior was swathed in an emotional red. Tess, the mother provider, was orange. The District Attorney, Fletcher, was green, symbolizing an inner struggle between good and yellow. Breathless Mahoney was bathed in violet, according to Storaro, the color of blood and moonlight. The film's various grotesques were shot through indigo gels, to suggest their link with night. The Blank—a man with no face at all—became the embodiment of black; a moral and emotional sinkhole threatening to swallow the universe.

"Storaro does this kind of thing all the time," recalled Sylbert. "I once told him 'Storaro—you're just trying to

# THE COMICS

*Today's Dick Tracy goes back to the Gould basics.*

*By William Wilson Goodson, Jr.*

After *Dick Tracy* creator Chester Gould retired in 1977, the strip was turned over to mystery writer Max Allan Collins, who had created his own series of books about Nolan, a tough mob hit man. Collins had also sold his own '30s private eye strip to syndicator Field Enterprises, but it wasn't successful.

In taking over the writing of *Dick Tracy*, Collins quickly phased-out Gould's more recent fanciful innovations, science fiction elements like the moon shuttle vehicle, Space Couple, and Moon Maid (who could fire lasers from her fingers), who got married off to Junior. Collins quite literally brought the strip back down to earth, if not strict reality. With strip artist Rick Fletcher's sudden death in 1983 the art work was taken over by Dick Locher, who had been an assistant on the strip from 1956 to 1961.

Story lines from recent years have included video piracy, by a character named Splitscreen, terrorism, cloning, and the release of computer viruses by master programmer Memory Banks. The Wraith, a hit man, had used advanced dream research to scare his victims to death in their nightmares. Whatever new tools crime may come up with, the face of greed seems to remain the same in Dick Tracy's world—as does the need for justice.

The most famous Tracy high tech toy, the two-way wrist radio, was first introduced in 1946. Diet Smith, a millionaire industrialist,

asked Tracy, the world's most incorruptable cop, to test the first one. Smith made the same arrangement to test his two-way wrist television in 1964 and the two-way wrist computer in 1986.

Though the Tracy newspaper strip lacks the popularity and wide distribution it once enjoyed, some of Gould's original strips have been reissued in comic book form by Blackthorn Publishers at an economical price, collecting about four months of black and white strips in each 48 page book. The series, which was suspended in the winter of 1989, began in 1987 by reprinting Gould's original story from October 1931. The original full color *Dick Tracy* comic books, started by Dell in 1949 and taken over by Harvey in 1950, now fetch collector's prices of as much as \$500 a copy. □

A '50s comic shows the science fiction slant Gould eventually took, eschewed by his successors.





Charles Durning as Chief of Police Brandon, bull horn in hand, calls for the mob to come out with their hands up. Left: The Brandon of Gould's strip.



make what you do look more difficult and intellectual because you are an Italian. This is all bullshit. This stuff you come up with—I've seen in every movie.'

"It's horrendous garbage, philosophical drivel, because the same color showed up with a new meaning every time we talked about it," said Sylbert. "Storaro does what every DP does. He takes gels and lights streets, backgrounds, and large panels. He does an extraordinary job too, no doubt about it. But the bullshit about the philosophy is total nonsense."

Ellenshaw, too, while championing the results Storaro has achieved on *DICK TRACY*, also took exception to the constant philosophizing. "I can't deny he does great work, but sometimes I think he's more interested in the explanation for why green is green than in getting it on the screen," said Ellenshaw, who worked with Storaro previously on his filming of *CAPTAIN EO*.

"Storaro gets an interesting image on this show, but I think it might have been more inter-

esting if he'd been less concerned with rationalizing his intentions than just going out and doing it," said Ellenshaw. "I saw a lot of that and it bothered me. The intentions and rationalizations are so other people will understand why the sidewalk is lavender and not orange. But does it matter that we understand? Why not just do it and enjoy?"

Ellenshaw said that the saving grace, for him, was that by the time he came on the show, most matters of lighting and design had already been decided. "The size and color of the moon, for instance, had already been settled," he said. "I would have been crazy by now if I had been here from the beginning."

Despite any qualms Ellenshaw may have had working on *DICK TRACY*, he had few regarding the premium placed

**"The size and color of the moon had already been decided. I would have been crazy by now had I been here from the beginning."**

*- Matte painter Harrison Ellenshaw -*

on style as opposed to story. "By now we are all used to hearing the usual warning signs," he said. "When they say a movie 'looks terrific,' its like describing a blind date as being 'very interesting.' We are realizing—maybe we have for a long time—that the key is writing. But if people bought *BATMAN*, they will see *DICK TRACY* four times. I'm 44 and remember Dick Tracy on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*. I'd take my chances with *DICK TRACY* more than with a lot of things I've worked on.

"Why? It rarely happens you get a strong script in a film like this. It ends up like *BRAZIL*, and Hollywood doesn't know what to do with movies like *BRAZIL*. Sure this is a \$40 million comic book. But I'd rather see them do a \$40 million comic than most other things because studios don't take these chances—they get burned every time. I'm thrilled someone said let's do *DICK TRACY* and put red on streets and use primary colors and take chances.

"I really think this picture will be a hit. I've seen it and I liked it. It was two hours of entertainment, and I had a good time and I liked the songs. It's better than any effects film

I've worked on since *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. I bullshitted about *TRON* when in my heart of hearts I knew it was boring. I'm betting *DICK TRACY* won't bomb. But if it does, let's face it. Everybody's going to see our [matte] work and like it."

According to Sylbert, it will not be mattes or lighting or prosthetics that make *DICK TRACY*, although each of these elements is absolutely vital. Ultimately, the picture will sink or swim, he believes, on its ability to charm audiences. Indeed Sylbert believes that it is charm as much as craft that will distinguish the film from the most recent comic book extravaganza—*BATMAN*. Sylbert admitted that Tim Burton's blockbuster—one he regards as "not much"—gave him and Beatty pause. It seemed highly unlikely to both of them that it would be possible to recreate the *BATMAN* craze that engulfed the country last year. Therefore, unlike Burton's picture, theirs would have to be innately charming and entertaining.

Recalled Sylbert, "The difference between *DICK TRACY* and *BATMAN*," I said to Warren, 'is that *BATMAN* has a score by Prince, where as we have Stevie Nicks, who did our music on *REDS*. The difference between Prince and Nicks is the difference between *BATMAN* and *DICK TRACY*."

It is Sylbert's belief, in fact, that *DICK TRACY* is the only movie in his, Storaro and Canonero's careers about which they can feel any genuine sense of accomplishment. "We created this together," he said. "It was about everyone being as smart as they can be. And boy, were we smart!!" □

Big Boy's mob, (l to r) Henry Silva as Influence, Bill Forsythe as Flattop, James Tolkin as Numbers and Chuck Hicks as the Brow, Gould's colorful gangsters.



# DICK TRACY

## THE FILMS, PRE-BEATTY

*Chester Gould's detective was once the foil of slap-dash movie serials and B-pictures.*

By William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Filed versions of Chester Gould's Dick Tracy have included four 15-chapter movie serials in the '30s and '40s and four '40s feature films of little more than sixty minutes, all currently available on videotape, as well as an early '50s TV series and a dreadful kiddie cartoon series from 1961.

The great detective's first serial appearance was in 1937 when **DICK TRACY** was issued by Republic Studios. Tracy was played by Ralph Byrd a handsome, young Midwesterner, who became closely associated with the role for many years. Byrd portrayed Tracy as an athletic, dedicated

professional, but without the touch of ironic humor one finds in the strip.

In the serial Tracy is an FBI agent operating in California minus the strip's cast of supporting characters, except for Junior (Lee Van Atta). Tracy's foe is the *Lame One*, head of the *Spider Ring*, an espionage organization armed with futuristic weapons. The serial Tracy is even more athletic than that of the strip, pole vaulting over an electric fence and making a mid-air transfer between planes, demonstrating his customary indestructibility.

The serial was so popular that the next year saw Republic issue another, **DICK TRACY RETURNS** (1938), with Byrd reappearing as Tracy and Jerry

Serial star Ralph Byrd as Tracy in 1947, with Anne Gwynn as Tess Trueheart (I) and June Clayworth as Dr. I. M. Learned, in the last of RKO's four film series.



Morgan Conway starred as Tracy in 1945 for RKO, the first feature based on Gould's crimefighter, treated as film noir.

Tucker taking the role of Junior. The more realistic story dealt with Tracy's pursuit of a criminal family headed by Pa Stark, played by Charles Middleton, famed as villain Ming the Merciless in the **FLASH GORDON** serials.

Republic returned the following year with **DICK TRACY'S G-MEN** (1939), a serial pitting Byrd against a worldwide espionage ring headed by Zarnoff (Irving Pichel), who is brought back to life by scientists after being apprehended by Tracy and executed in the first episode. A young Jennifer Jones plays Gwen, Tracy's femme interest in the serials, but not the comics.

Byrd played Tracy for Republic for the last time in their 1941 serial **DICK TRACY VS. CRIME INC.** (rereleased under the title **DICK TRACY AND THE PHANTOM EMPIRE**), facing the Ghost (Ralph Morany), a villain with the scientific innovation of invisibility.

It was not until 1945 that

Tracy appeared in a feature film, titled **DICK TRACY**. Produced by RKO, Morgan Conway starred as Tracy, with a supporting cast of characters drawn from Gould's strip: Anne Jeffrey as Tess Trueheart, Lyle Latell as Pat Patton and Mickey Kuhn as Junior. Mike Mazurki, known for his earlier appearance as the giant hood, Moose, in Dick Powell's **MURDER MY SWEET**, played the villain, Splitface, a murdering extortionist. The first Tracy feature is rather disappointing, with Conway too relaxed as Tracy and not especially athletic looking, involved in a weak plot.

Conway, Jeffrey, and Latell reappeared the following year in **DICK TRACY VS. CUEBALL** (1946), a second RKO feature pitting Tracy against Dick Wessel as the giant, bald hitman of a gang of jewel smugglers. Though Conway still lacked Tracy's forcefulness, the action involved a

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# CLASS OF 1999

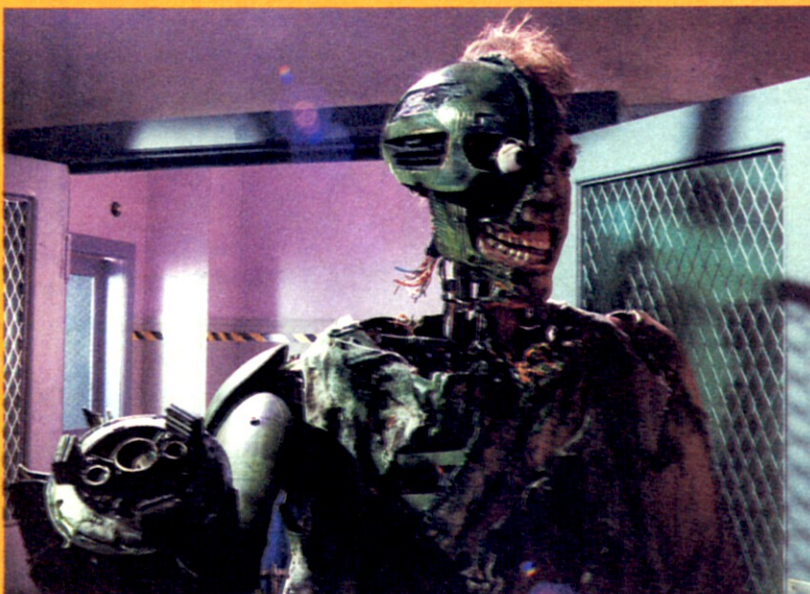
By Dale Kutzera

Director Mark Lester's *CLASS OF 1999* features ambitious, low-budget special effects supervised by Eric Allard, the mechanical effects expert whose ground-breaking work was featured in the *SHORT CIRCUIT* films. Lester filmed *CLASS OF 1999* on a slim \$7 million budget for Vestron Pictures in November 1988, only to see the production shelved when financial woes forced Vestron to abandon theatrical production and distribution. Vestron sold theatrical rights to Taurus Entertainment, which was set to open the film regionally May 4, with bows in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Detroit.

The effects centerpiece of Lester's tale of students revolting against oppressive android teachers is the climactic destruction of Coach Bryles, a pitched battle straight out of James Cameron's *THE TERMINATOR*. According to Allard, the Bryles sequence is one of the most extensive uses of makeup and mechanical effects ever put on film. Where *THE TERMINATOR* resorted to a small stop-motion puppet and rear projection, Bryles was done live-action. "The standard way to have Bryles walk would be to create a pixilated miniature or a go-motion model and then matte him walking across the floor," Allard said. "But we did it live-action. We built a full-size, remote-control, telemetrically-operated cyborg."

"It worked really well," Lester said of Allard's Bryles effect. "We had various faces on the puppet—smiling, angry, mad, etc.—so we kept changing them as the puppet walked. It was quite ingenious what

## Live-action, full-scale Terminator-style effects devised on a low budget.



Coach Bryles-turned-student-stalking android, the film's effects centerpiece, a full-scale, telemetrically operated robot mechanism devised by Eric Allard's Hollywood-based All Effects.

Eric did with these puppet heads."

Despite the extra time and effort required to film live, full-scale effects, the realism achieved is worth the effort, according to Allard. His North-Hollywood-based All Effects Company is noted for its expertise in practical, in-front-of-the-camera effects, as opposed to elaborate optical processing. A former demolitions expert for the Green Berets, Allard first entered film production as a propmaker. His background in pyrotechnics, however, led to work in mechanical effects, and eventually special effects on films

like *THE BLOB* (1987) and Michael Jackson's *MOONWALKER* video.

Lester chose Allard after viewing his work on the *SHORT CIRCUIT* films and taking a tour of Allard's shop. "At the end of this picture the teachers transform into actual robots," said Lester. "We needed someone who was familiar with that kind of puppeteering. It looks amazingly real without a lot of process photography, and you can do it right on the set—so you know what you're getting. It really looks authentic, like somebody's actually walking."

Though *CLASS OF 1999*'s

original budget for special effects had been set at just \$500,000, most estimates, including All Effects', leaned toward \$2 million. Like any Hollywood veteran, however, Allard offered the film's producers a compromise: \$1.3 million for the effects, in exchange for some creative input, points in the film's profits, and a chance for Allard to direct the second unit effects work. "It's a good deal for me," said Allard. "Directing is what I want to move toward. In the end, I directed 30 days, because my stuff was working real well."

Allard's first task was to lock himself in a room with All Effects storyboard artist Bud Lewis and plan each of the more than 400 major effects shots. Allard worked with Lester to alter the script when necessary. "We went through every story board and talked about the possibilities," said Allard. One of my strengths is that I can get an instant grasp on what needs to be done mechanically to pull off an effect cinematically. I'm

good at working with people. If they've got a better idea than I do, I have no problem with that. We just cross out what I had and write in what they want to do. The most important thing is that we're all in sync."

Allard enlisted engineer Ron Griffin, electronic expert Ron Zarro, model specialist Ron Thornton, makeup supervisor Rick Stratton, and floor effects coordinator Joe Ramsey, and spent two weeks designing the effects. "The first thing we did was take photographs of our actors against a grid," said Allard. "Then we took body impressions and





Allard and Bryles, the flipside of the effects expert's **SHORT CIRCUIT** technology.

worked within the dimensions of the individual. Once you have identified size constraints—the diameter, the distance from shoulder to elbow and elbow to wrist—it really becomes a straight-forward engineering problem: you've got a rocket launcher that weighs three pounds and you've got to make it move like a human arm."

Among the engineering problems Allard encountered were a flame-throwing arm, a drill-arm, a claw arm, and a variety of makeup and stunt effects, like the scene in which teacher Pam Grier gets ripped apart to reveal her robotic innards. Each sequence was approached with the same meticulous planning and preparation, including cardboard model prototypes.

"When you use a 3-D model, it [the work] goes quickly," said Allard. "We never spend more than a couple weeks identifying the sizes, strengths, and basic geometry. Once we have

that, we identify where fulcrum points will have to be, whether we'll use a pulley or lever or servo, then rate the components in order of their necessity and start building."

At the peak of production, All Effects had four mills and four lathes cranking out parts for **CLASS OF 1999**. At the same time, the makeup department was using the same plans to cast foam latex prosthetics

Patrick Kirkpatrick as Bryles, rehearsing All Effects' rocket launcher arm.



and outer skins that would fit over the mechanisms. As the production was filmed almost entirely on location at an abandoned junior high school in Seattle, the All Effects crew had to be mobile. The majority of the effects sequences were scheduled for the last weeks of the shoot. As specific pieces were finished in Los Angeles, they would be shipped to Seattle in time for filming. "Thank God for Federal Express," said makeup supervisor Rick Stratton. "Our whole effects facility went up there," Allard added. "We had four semi-trailers crammed full of equipment. When we got to the school we converted a couple rooms into an effects studio and a makeup room."

For the crucial Bryles cyborg, Allard expanded on the use of telemetrics he pioneered for **SHORT CIRCUIT**. Telemetric replaces cable-controlled mechanisms with remote control technology. Telemetric servos in a costume worn by a puppeteer transmit movements to the Bryles robot. According to Allard, the technique increases the realism of the performance and saves money by decreasing the number of puppeteers necessary. "Obviously, if you have to deal with less people it becomes easier at a certain level," Allard said, "but it ended up adding to the performance. The robot's gesticulations were more in sync with what he was saying, because just one person wore the suit that controlled the upper body."

Allard's telemetric suits use the same Futaba transmitters that guide the flight of remote control model airplanes.



Pam Grier as Ms. Conners, revealing All Effects' prop robot innards.

"There's a potentiometer underneath a joystick on the standard Futaba transmitter that compares a signal from the joystick to the servo," explained Allard. "By moving the stick you are creating a variable resistance. It's always comparing that signal and keeping it the same. When you move the joystick the servo will move a proportional amount."

Instead of joysticks, Allard's potentiometers are connected to axes of movement on elbows, wrists, hands, etc. "We tie that in with parts we buy from Futaba," said Allard. "Their radio transmission is pulse-code modulated on a dedicated frequency which means there's a signal that locks-in each transmitter to each receiver so that you get very little interference. There are four different frequencies we are working with on one robot, all radio controlled. One puppeteer would handle the upper body, one the lower body and then we would have two people with transmitters for facial expressions and neck movements. It's just incredible the amount of articulation you can get with just four puppeteers. Bryles really did come to life. It was just amazing to have this guy walking across the stage."

While Bryles required state of the art technology, Allard



The effects climax, a screaming Bryles impaled on the front of a forklift truck.

and his crew were not shy about employing more traditional effects techniques. One sequence required the hand of the robot played by Pam Grier to melt, revealing a rocket launcher beneath. "We do tricks to avoid optical work," said Allard. "We did a time lapse shot of her hand melting, but with real time smoke.

"The amazing thing is that this isn't done more often," said Allard of his time and money-saving methods. "In the hey-day of motion control, from STAR WARS on, visual effects became so technical and so many motion control people came into the industry that a lot of the old filmmaking techniques got thrown by the way-side. My main focus on mechanical effects is to try and utilize some of these older techniques.

I don't take anything away from the visual effects guys. They are my heroes and I'd love to work with George Lucas or Boss Film and do a big picture where the visual effects complement the mechanical effects. I think the ILM style of visual effects definitely enhances a picture beyond what you can do with just mechanical effects. Yet it seems like I get the ones where they just don't want to spend any money on visual effects. They want it all done live-action, usually for budgetary reasons."

Allard admitted it's difficult knowing the work he achieved for \$1.3 million is going to be compared with effects in films with ten times that budget. "This is a B picture," he said. "They have special effects budgets of \$10 or \$20 million and we spent \$7 million on the whole movie. We never had time to do camera tests and there were very few take twos, but by and large we got everything we wanted. My basic theory is that there's nothing you can't do with 50 good men and \$2 million, and that's the truth." □

All Effects' full-figure, telemetrically operated Bryles puppet, suspended on wires, and filmed live-action, pausing to look at the heart plucked from a student victim. Inset: Panning up from the puppet's feet for full shock effect.



All Effects' makeup supervisor Rick Stratton puts the finishing touches on Bryles.



# CLASS OF 1999

## ON LOCATION

*At Kennedy High director Mark Lester lectures on devising his effects-laden scenario.*

*By Dale Kutzera*

CLASS OF 1999 was the brainchild of its director, Mark Lester, who made **COMMANDO** with Arnold Schwarzenegger. For the filming, Lester converted Seattle's Alexander Hamilton Junior High, closed for years, into the Kennedy High of a troubled near future.

"Originally I did a film called **CLASS OF 1984**, which is about a teacher who comes to a school where the kids are violent," said Lester during filming. "He tries to stop their drug dealing and ends up fighting all the kids and killing them. It was a horror/nightmare tale and did really well, and I thought it would have been good if I'd made the picture where the students were the heroes."

In a school room marked "Detention Area," Lester and cinematographer Mark Irwin are readying an effects scene with John P. Ryan as one of the film's robot teachers gone amuck. Ryan has stood in the same spot for over an hour as makeup technicians carefully work on his prosthetic claw arm. Cuts made in the foam latex skin must be closed and covered with flesh colored makeup. When the claw is activated, the temporary seals will be broken to reveal the weapon.

"There is so much gang violence taking place today that I began to develop the story right off what was going on in the news," said Lester of the film's inspiration. "I added a science fiction element, a Department of Educational Defense, that is formed to defend the schools. A corporation is hired to create

changed around to create those kind of sequences."

Finding a real school in which to set the film's action was a real plus for the production. "The high school was hard to get actually," said Lester. "It was being used by a Christian school. So we had to negotiate with them and the neighborhood, because we had all these explosions and flame-throwers right inside. There were asbestos problems, and we had to fireproof entire hallways and get explosion permits in order to blow up classrooms. We had an enormous number of stunts and explosions. We blew up the front of the school. We even drove a bus into it." □

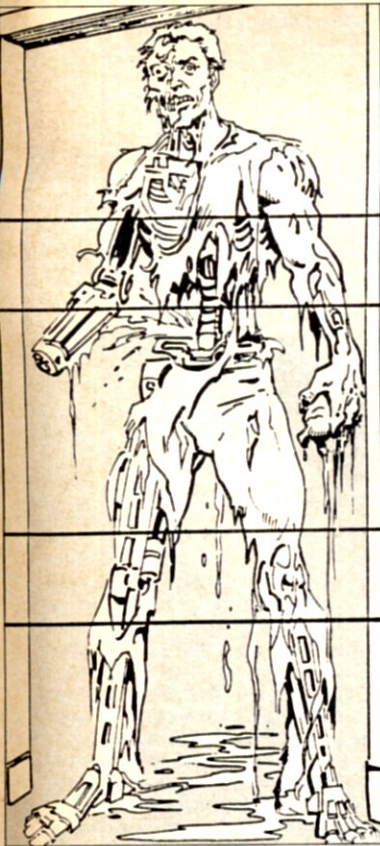


Heading the class, director Mark Lester.

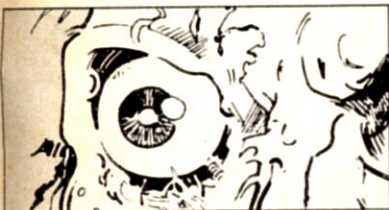
these robots for high schools. They could handle the kids and wouldn't fear being assaulted. At first, everything goes well but soon they spank the students, hit them, and ultimately their programming goes awry and the action begins."

Lester tailored his script to make the most of his effects sequences, with input from Eric Allard's All Effects company. "Everything that went into the script that involves special effects was discussed," said Lester. "The story never changed, but some of the incidents—how the battle would be fought—were. I do that with the stunt and effects people on every movie. Adjustments are made according to what would be most exciting and the script is

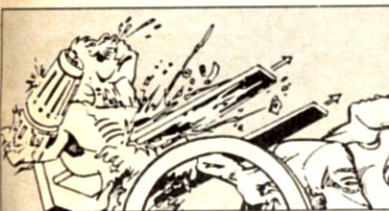
John P. Ryan as Mr. Hardin, fitted with All Effects' claw arm, requiring careful camera placement to hide Ryan's real arm, strapped behind.



Storyboards for the Bryles sequence by All Effects artist Bud Lewis, indicating the pan upward on the full-figure puppet effect and camera zoom into the glowing green micro lens of the robot's eyeball.



The storyboard design for the film's climax, as the heroine impales Bryles on a forklift and decapitates the robot.



# FILM RATINGS

## BASKET CASE 2

Directed by Frank Henenlotter. S.G.E., 3/90, 91 mins. With: Kevin Van Hentenryck, Annie Ross, Heather Rattray, Kathryn Meisle.

No sooner does Duane Bradley (Kevin Van Hentenryck) hobble out of the hospital with his deformed, psychic, psychotic, homicidal, former Siamese twin, Belial, tucked into a laundry hamper (not bad for a guy who, several minutes earlier, was castrated, had his throat slashed, and fell three stories), than the two wind up in the care of Granny Ruth (Annie Ross) and her granddaughter Susan (Heather Rattray), altruists who run a sort of HEARTBREAK HOTEL for "unique individuals." When a snooping reporter and a meddling private eye threaten to expose their haven, Belial is set loose.

A bigger budget has given special makeup effects artist Gabe Bartalos a chance to create a houseful of outcasts marked with elaborate, and often poignant, deformities, and to build a more sophisticated Belial. But low-budget auteur Frank Henenlotter's sequel to his 1982 cult hit loses its kick about two-thirds of the way through (imagine watching the finale of FREAKS three times over and you get some idea of the central portion of the film), and seems unable to revive it for what would otherwise be a genuinely wicked coda. Give the guy credit: his melding of horror, humor, creepiness and pathos is bracingly original. He's just got to find a story that will accommodate all four.

● Dan Persons

## BLACK ROSES

Directed by John Fasano. USA (cable), 2/90, 83 mins. With: John Martin, Ken Swofford, Sal Viviano, Julia Adams.

Made in 1988, this is another rock horror where the heavy metal band of the title are demons out to corrupt good little teenagers. This time, it doesn't even take backmasking, just playing their LPs causes scaly creatures to crawl out of the speaker and eat your parents. Meantime, high school students exposed to a live concert are turning evil—smoking in bed, turning over trash cans, acting apathetic in school, and killing Mom and Pop. School teacher John Martin figures out what's going on but can get no one to believe him, so he sets fire to the auditorium where the band is playing, with the town's teenagers inside.

There are some decent ani-

FILM TITLE	●●●●			●●●		●●		●		○		
	MUST SEE	EXCELLENT	GOOD	MEDIOCRE	POOR	VJB	FSC	DG	JPH	BK	GK	DS
<b>BASKET CASE 2</b> /Frank Henenlotter <i>Shapiro Glickenhau, 3/90, 89 mins.</i>			●●			●●			●●	●●		●●
<b>BLACK ROSES</b> /John Fasano <i>USA Cable Network, 2/90, 83 mins.</i>			○						●	●		●
<b>THE BLOOD OF HEROES</b> /David Peoples <i>New Line, 3/90, 91 mins.</i>			●●	●●●						●		
<b>BLUE STEEL</b> /Kathryn Bigelow <i>MGM/UA, 3/90, 102 mins.</i>		●●●	●●●●	●●●		●●			●	●		●●
<b>THE COOK, THE THIEF...</b> /Peter Greenaway <i>Miramax, 3/90, 120 mins.</i>		●●●	●●●	●●●●		●●			●●	●●●		●●
<b>DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS</b> /Stuart Gordon <i>CBS-TV, 1/90, 120 mins.</i>		○							●	●	●●	●●
<b>THE DEATH OF THE INCREDIBLE HULK</b> / <i>Bill Bixby, NBC-TV, 2/90, 120 mins.</i>		●								○	○	
<b>THE FIRST POWER</b> /Robert Resnikoff <i>Orion, 4/90, 98 mins.</i>		●	●	○		○			●	●		
<b>THE GIRL IN A SWING</b> /Gordon Hessler <i>Millimeter Films, 11/89, 112 mins.</i>		●●	●●●	●					●●	●		
<b>HEART CONDITION</b> /James D. Parriott <i>New Line, 1/90, 95 mins.</i>		●	●	○						●		
<b>THE HANDMAID'S TALE</b> /Volker Schlöndorff <i>Cinecom, 2/90, 109 mins.</i>		●●	●●●						●●	●●		●●
<b>THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER</b> / <i>James McTiernan, Paramount, 3/90, 137 mins.</i>		●●	●	●●●					●	●●		●●●
<b>HENRY</b> /James McNaughton <i>Maljack Productions, 9/89, 83 mins.</i>		●●●	●●●●	●●●●		●●●			●●	●●		
<b>THE HOWLING V</b> /Neal Sundstrom <i>Int'l Video, 11/89.</i>		○							●	●		●
<b>JOE VS THE VOLCANO</b> /John Patrick Shanley <i>Warner Bros, 3/90, 102 mins.</i>		●●	●						●	●●		
<b>LEATHERFACE</b> /Jeff Burr <i>New Line, 1/90, 81 mins.</i>		●●●	●	○					●●	●		●
<b>THE LITTLE MERMAID</b> /John Musker <i>Buena Vista, 11/89, 82 mins.</i>		●●●	●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
<b>LOOK WHO'S TALKING</b> /Amy Heckerling <i>Tri-Star, 10/89, 82 mins.</i>		●	●●						●	●		
<b>LORD OF THE FLIES</b> /Harry Hook <i>Nelson Ent., 3/90, 90 mins.</i>		●●	●●	●●					●	●		●●
<b>NIGHTBREED</b> /Clive Barker <i>20th Century-Fox, 2/90, 99 mins.</i>		●●	●	○		●			●●	●●		●●●
<b>THE SIMPSONS</b> /James L. Brooks <i>Fox-TV, weekly series, 30 mins.</i>		●●●	●●●						●●	●●●		
<b>THE STEPFATHER 2</b> /Jeff Burr <i>Millimeter, 11/89, 86 mins.</i>		●●●	●●						●	●		●●
<b>TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES</b> / <i>Steve Barron, New Line, 3/90, 93 mins.</i>		●	●●●	●●					●	●		●●
<b>TOXIC AVENGER III</b> /Lloyd Kaufman <i>Troma, 11/89, 89 mins.</i>		○		○					○			●
<b>TREMORS</b> /Ron Underwood <i>Universal, 1/90, 96 mins.</i>		●●●	●●	●		●●			●●	●●		●●●
<b>TWIN PEAKS</b> /David Lynch <i>ABC-TV, 4/90, 120 mins.</i>		●●●	●●			●			●●●	●●●		●

VJB/Vincent J. Bossone FSC/Frederick S. Clarke DG/Dann Gire JPH/Judith P. Harris  
BK/Bill Kelley GK/Gary Kimber DS/Dan Scapperotti

matronic makeups on view (courtesy of Richard Alonzo, Anthony C. Bua, Arnold Garguilo, and John Dodds), but the film is so abysmally written by Cindy Sorrell and directed by John Fasano, the brief makeup sequences become laughable. No wonder this was never released theatrically.

● Judith P. Harris

## THE BLOOD OF HEROES

Directed by David Peoples. New Line Cinema, 3/90, 91 mins. With: Rutger Hauer, Joan Chen, Vincent D'Onofrio, Delroy Lindo.

Crummy title for an entertaining science fiction actioner filmed as SALUTE OF THE JUGGER. Hauer is the leader of a team of itinerant athletes, "juggers," who engage in a sport that's part dog-skull football, part AMERICAN GLADIATORS, and part biker-bar free-for-all. We've seen this post-apocalyptic, MAD MAX world before, but writer/director David Peoples, who scripted Ridley Scott's BLADE RUNNER, has given it a rare, gender-equal tone—all the

way to providing his female juggers with their own set of whores, and casting the lithe, beautiful Joan Chen in the central role of the novice, and sexily vicious, skull-carrier (you can tell she's to be admired: she's given the most attractive bruises).

The game, when played, is anything but simple—by the time the film reaches its obligatory, ROCKY-style ending you many still have trouble recognizing who exactly is pulp-igning whom. It doesn't help that

we never get a clear idea what motivates these people to such carnage—what are they fighting for? But it's fun, with enough wit and style that, for once, you don't feel guilty about having your buttons so blatantly punched. Sly Stallone should be so clever.

●● Dan Persons

## BLUE STEEL

Directed by Kathryn Bigelow. 3/90, 120 mins. With: Jamie Lee Curtis, Ron Silver, Clancy Brown, Louise Fletcher.

Stylish director Kathryn Bigelow (NEAR DARK) has disguised a movie about the Boogeyman (played this time around by natty, upscale Ron Silver) as a taut suspense thriller. Jamie Lee Curtis reprises the role she originated in HALLOWEEN, but with a few significant twists: instead of an unarmed teenager, she's a N.Y.P.D. policewoman with the training and firepower to deal with Silver's psychotic killer. Following horror conventions, Silver evades heavy police surveillance and shows up in the most disturbing places (like Curtis' locked apartment). After trying fruitlessly to escape Silver's harassment, Curtis comes to realize that it's her job to track him down. Bigelow and co-screenwriter Eric Red (THE HITCHER) know how to keep the suspense building and the tension crackling. Bigelow's gritty, spare directorial style, and convincing performances from Curtis and Silver, make for an absorbing film.

●●● Dan Perez

## THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER

Directed by Peter Greenaway. Miramax, 3/90, 120 mins. With: Richard Bohringer, Michael Gambon, Helen Mirren, Alan Howard.

Director Peter Greenaway has fashioned one of the most repulsive yet interesting fables to come along in some time. Perhaps anytime. Albert Spica (Michael Gambon) is a vicious gang leader whose pretensions to culture revolve around the culinary delights of his favorite restaurant, where most of the action takes place. Spica insults and abuses friends and foes alike, but a special target of his cruelty is his wife, Georgina (Helen Mirren). One night she finds comfort in the arms of a stranger. The couple's erotic adventures all take place within the confines of the restaurant, almost under the nose of her self-absorbed husband. When Spica, the thief of the title, discovers his wife's infidel-



Jamie Lee Curtis, back in HALLOWEEN territory in BLUE STEEL.

ity he threatens to kill and eat her lover. But Georgina and the others who have suffered indignities at Spica's hands band together for a revenge fitting, but probably too grotesque for even an EC comic.

It's not an easy film to sit through for two hours. Greenaway doesn't pull his punches, and the truly disgusting opening scenes may send some viewers home early. But Greenaway's bizarre, surreal atmosphere and strong characterizations generate a repugnant fascination.

• • Dan Scapperotti

## FEAR

Directed by Rockne S. O'Bannon. Vestron, 8/90, 93 mins. With: Ally Sheedy, Lauren Hutton, Michael O'Keefe.

For his lackluster feature directing debut, former TWILIGHT ZONE scripter Rockne S. O'Bannon has dreamed up an ESP cat and mouse chase, one that ends up coming across like a mediocre episode of ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS. Maybe that's why this Vestron production is headed straight to video. Police psychic Casey (Ally Sheedy) has her mind invaded by the equally empowered "Shadowman," who proceeds to torment her with blue-tinted killings. As the psycho gets off on his victims' terror, Casey pushes her abilities to the limit to hunt him down. Though managing some nice visual tricks, *a la* John Carpenter's THE EYES OF LAURA MARS, and a reasonably suspenseful atmosphere, O'Bannon's approach is far too tame for his hackneyed scenario. More effects and blood could have resulted in a grippingly real film instead of one resembling an emotionally lame TV movie-of-the-week.

• Daniel Schweiger

## THE FIRST POWER

Directed by Robert Resnikoff. Orion Pictures, 4/90, 98 mins. With: Lou Diamond Phillips, Jeff Kober, Tracy Griffith, Mykel T. Williamson.

This is a murky tale of a serial killer (Jeff Kober) who, as a disciple of Satan, is bestowed the first power, the power of resurrection, and thus, immortality. LABAMBA star Lou Diamond Phillips is the skeptical L.A. detective determined to put an end to the occult murders with the aid of psychic/love interest Tracy Griffith. First-time director Robert Resnikoff, working from his own screenplay, fails to forge a cohesive, compelling narrative out of the rough-hewn exposition-laden proceedings. Consequently, a couple of choice action sequences seem merely an excuse for grandstand filmmaking instead of a seamless part of a whole. Performances are seldom on target, suggesting an unsure hand at the helm. Though parallels may be drawn with "reanimated psycho movies" like SHOCKER, this film owes more to those mainstream theological horrors of the '70s, THE EXORCIST and THE OMEN. An open-ended finale leaves room for a sequel. • Vincent Bossone

## GRANDMA'S HOUSE

Directed by Peter Rader. Omega/Academy (video), 12/89, 89 mins. With: Eric Foster, Kim Valentine, Len Lesser.

Though nicely photographed, an incoherent and finally depressing plot ruins this film. Two young teens (brother and sister—good performances from Eric Foster and Kim Valentine) go to live on their grandparents' farm after their father dies. The boy begins to suspect his grandparents of murder. When an escaped murderous lunatic shows up, the whole film falls apart. TV-movie level thrills and suspense are fairly smoothly done, but the ending is one twist too many and leaves the viewer confused and let down. Brinke Stevens has an atypical role (she keeps her clothes on). Pretty much a waste of time.

• David Wilt

## HOWLING V: THE REBIRTH

Directed by Neal Sundstrom. Allied Vision. With: Philip Davis, Victoria Caitlin, Ben Cole, and William Shockney.

In this, the fourth lame sequel to Joe Dante's 1981 werewolf thriller, a group of dull, irritating, and at first seemingly unrelated people are invited to spend the night at a Hungarian castle abandoned since a mysterious mass murder took place there five centuries earlier. Naturally, upon their arrival they immediately start wandering off by themselves so the werewolf who stalks the castle can start killing them off one by one.

The mildly amusing dialogue of the first 20 minutes might lull some gullible viewers into believing that once the horror starts they'll actually care who lives, who dies, and who turns out to be the werewolf. But they won't: between the sluggish pace, the appalling bad acting, and the idiot plot, they'll just find themselves wanting the poochie to hurry up slaughtering the cast so the movie can end already.

As for the "surprise" identity of the werewolf: since there's only one character the audience is even momentarily tempted to like, that's not incredibly hard to guess.

• Adam-Troy Castro

## JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO

Directed by John Patrick Shanley. Warner Bros, 3/90, 94 mins. With: Tom Hanks, Meg Ryan, Lloyd Bridges, Abe Vigoda.

With the backing of the Amblin Entertainment folks (Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall), first-time writer/director John Patrick Shanley brews up a very uneven mixture of romantic comedy, adventure and fable. Tom Hanks stars as a man who thinks he only has a few months to live. Having nothing better to do, he agrees to jump into a volcano to appease the fire god of a bunch of orange-

soda-crazed South Sea islanders. Along the way, he meets Meg Ryan (a very talented comedienne who gives her all in three different roles), and their travels and trials yield a few funny sequences (one quite magical), but it's too disjointed to ever really work. Worse yet, Hanks just sort of stumbles through the movie, never quite catching the gist of his Everyman role. Ryan, however, almost makes the movie worth the price of admission. Almost.

As the plaster-of-Paris volcano sinks slowly under the studio tank waves beneath the night sky (which rapidly gives way to a title background which looks like it was lifted from the old BEWITCHED TV series), you'll likely be wondering how the filmmakers ever expected you to swallow (much less appreciate) this story. Let's hope Shanley's bid for success using an ultra-stylized sense of production design isn't an ill-omen for the fortunes of DICK TRACY.

• Dan Perez

## JUST THE FEEBLES

Directed by Peter Jackson. Southgate Films, 5/90, 96 mins. Voices: Donna Akersten, Stuart Devenie, Mark Hadlow.

"The Muppet Show Meets the Garbage Pail Kids" in the most viscerally disgusting, jaded, occasionally side-splitting, and even, God help me, charming puppet show ever filmed. New Zealander Peter Jackson offers a behind-the-scenes look at the "Feebles Variety Show," as depraved a collection of cut-rate ensemble performers as have ever appeared off-off-Broadway. Despite its inexcusable excess and overlength, the film is nevertheless an improvement over Jackson's first feature, the unfathomably well regarded cult film BAD TASTE.

But when that no good, muckraking journalist Fly gobbles up some lip-smacking excrement; when Harry the Hare appears in a truly *seminal*



Everyman Tom Hanks in JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO.

menage a trois and subsequently erupts in a volcano of sex disease-inspired ooze; when Blech the Walrus enjoys a little pussy who's name currently escapes me; when Heidi the Hippo lays hideous waste to a bake shop, and when contortionist Arbee Bargwan inadvertently gets his head stuck where the sun don't shine—you may just wish you had skipped dinner, and quite possibly, this film as well. Do not, please do not, let your children see this until they reach voting age. • Sheldon Teitelbaum

## LORD OF THE FLIES

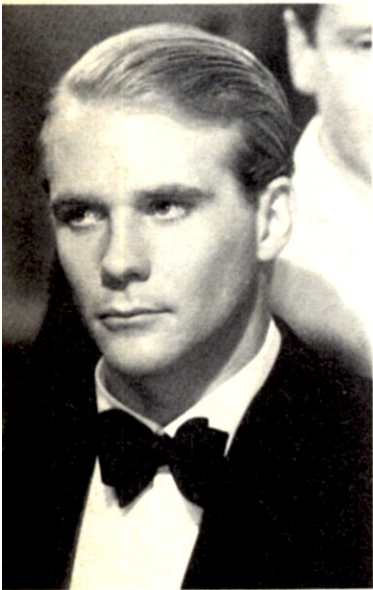
Directed by Harry Hook. Nelson Entertainment, 3/90, 90 mins. With: Balthazar Getty, Chris Furrh, Daniel Pipoly, Badge Dale, Michael Green.

This Americanized version of the classic Sir William Golding novel (adapted by Jay Presson Allen credited as Sara Schiff) is absorbing, albeit, ultimately disappointing. A plane crash strands a group of young American military cadets on a remote tropical island, where they gradually revert to an animalistic mode of behavior more suited to savages than disciplined future officers. Golding's message—that men unencumbered by established order will revert to their more primitive instincts—is especially unsettling when set against an adolescent backdrop.

Credits—sound, photography and music—are top-notch, and the young cast is uniformly excellent. With all of its virtues, however, director Harry Hook (THE KITCHEN TOTO) fails to adequately build the story's momentum; when the boys are suddenly rescued (in keeping with the

Gambon in THE COOK, THE THIEF, HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER.





Jason Connery, **THE SECRET LIFE OF IAN FLEMING**.

book), the film comes to an abrupt—and—unsatisfying—end. ●● Kyle Counts

## THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Directed by Tony Richardson. A Saban/Scherick Production, NBC, 3/90, 4 hrs. With: Burt Lancaster, Charles Dance, Teri Polo, Ian Richardson, Andrea Ferreol.

Erik, the mysterious title character of Gaston Leroux' novel, was a master at knowing when to stay out of sight. Unfortunately, this four hour NBC miniseries stands in the glare of prime time far too long, sacrificing pacing and suspense so vital to the story. Translating his play into a miniseries, Arthur Kopit burdens the vehicle with excess baggage—overlong operatic intervals, inappropriate scenes and supporting performances exaggerated to ridiculous extremes (Andrea Ferreol's aging opera star gives new meaning to the term comic opera). Kopit's vision owes as much to *Beauty and the Beast* as to Leroux. The sets and costumes are impressive. Kopit tosses some nifty curve balls into the script, and the three leads—Burt Lancaster, Charles Dance, and Teri Polo—respond with intriguing performances. An editor armed with sharp scissors might have made this a good TV movie.

●● Mark Dawidziak

## PROM NIGHT 3: THE LAST KISS

Directed by Ron Oliver and Peter Simpson. I.V.E., 6/90. With: Courtney Taylor, Tim Conlon, Cyndy Preston.

Mary Lou Maloney, introduced in 1987's *HELLO MARY LOU*: *PROM NIGHT II*, returns from the grave but

heads direct to video shelves. Co-directed and written by Ron Oliver, who scripted the earlier installment, the film is your basic deal with the devil story. High schooler Tim Conlon receives a boost in social status in return for his undying love to Mary Lou (Courtney Taylor), who bumps off any obstacles in his way. When Conlon tries to call off the pact, she won't take no for an answer.

Oliver tries valiantly for a black comedic tone as opposed to the more straightforward horror of part II, but much of the humor is juvenile and sophomoric. Oliver's self-indulgent cameo as a '50s sex education doctor and his one-liner voice-overs don't help.

Casting is also problematic. Conlon comes off like a Rob Lowe clone and Taylor is not terribly convincing as the quintessential bad girl of the Fifties. Staturesque Lisa Schrage who made the most of the role in the earlier installment, now a high-priced fashion model, couldn't be enticed back. It's good for a few laughs, but it's the weakest of the lot. Oh, and it bears absolutely no connection to the original *PROM NIGHT* (1980).

●● Gary Kimber

## THE SECRET LIFE OF IAN FLEMING

Directed by Ferdinand Fairfax. TNT-TV, 3/90, 120 mins. With: Jason Connery, Kristin Scott Thomas, Joss Ackland, Patricia Hodge, David Warner.

Try "The Specious Life of Ian Fleming." The young life of James Bond's creator would make a fascinating TV movie, but writer Robert Avrech was given a double-zero designation for this script assignment—a license to fabricate. This cable feature tries rather too hard to make the point that Fleming himself was the model for Bond. But this is a case of live and let lie. Avrech (*BODY DOUBLE*) weaves wholesale fancy around the known facts of Fleming's life. Some of this

invention is corny. Some is downright silly. And the complex and ruthless side of Fleming's nature is rich territory left unexplored.

Okay, it was a neat idea to get Jason Connery—to play Fleming. And Bond fans will have fun spotting elements from the book and movies: a Goldfinger-type Nazi, a bacarrat duel, a martini shaken not stirred, a Miss Moneypenny-type secretary. Fleming, however, was a man of wit and style, and a movie about him should not come up lacking in these departments.

●● Mark Dawidziak

## THE SLEEPING CAR

Directed by Douglas Curtis. Vidmark Entertainment, 5/90, 90 mins. With: David Naughton, Kevin McCarthy, Judi Aronson.

David Naughton rents an apartment in an old, converted railway sleeping car in this direct-to-video horror. His presence somehow brings back the evil spirit of *The Myster*, the latest no-threat entry in the Jason/Freddy slasher sweepstakes, played by makeup effects expert John Carl Buechler. The film might have been subtitled "Attack of the Killer Bed," since the vengeful spirit uses such a contrivance to bump off its few victims. Though talented performers, neither Naughton nor Kevin McCarthy, as a crotchety ghostbuster, bring anything special to the film except perhaps marquee—or in this case, cassette box—value. If we get many more of these unimaginative genre clones, the horror film could go the way of the western. ● Dan Scapperotti

## SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION

Directed by Tobe Hooper. Taurus Entertainment, 3/90. With: Brad Dourif, Melinda Dillon, Cynthia Bain, Jon Cypher.

This unglued thriller—about a man born out of an H-Bomb experiment who can generate deadly fires around him—is proof positive that Tobe Hoop-



Anjelica Huston's high camp sorceress in **THE WITCHES**.

er could *not* have directed *POLTERGEIST*. Brad Dourif (vainly attempting a leading man role) stars as Sam Kramer, a freakish victim of an anti-radiation drug that was administered to his parents in a nuclear project in the '50s. Inexplicably, on his birthday Sam's finger splits open, emitting a burst of fiery energy. Thereafter, every time he gets upset (on the average of every five minutes—this guy is an accident waiting to happen), someone he has come in contact with meets a fiery death. The subplot, about some strange goings-on involving his girlfriend (Cynthia Bain, the only sympathetic performer in the entire cast) and her wheelchair-bound grandfather, is dopey beyond words.

No wonder this movie was deemed all but unreleasable: aside from a few interesting fire effects (by Stephen Brooks, under the supervision of Apogee's John Dykstra), the script is preposterous, the characters one-note, and the suspense nonexistent. Too bad Dourif's talents didn't extend to torching the negative of this execrable piece of shlock.

●● Kyle Counts

## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

Directed by Steve Barron. New Line Cinema, 3/90, 93 minutes. With: Judith Hoag, Elias Koteas, Josh Pais.

Hey dudes, the Turtles—heroes of comic books and cartoons—are here in this live-action film firmly pitched to a 7-12 year-old audience. Older fans may get a chuckle from the occasional good line or be impressed by the animatronics work from Jim Henson's Creature Shop. The story concerns the origins of the mutated heroes as well as Splinter, the giant rat who is their spiritual leader. They must rescue Splinter from an army of pre-teen thieves working for the Shredder, the samurai wanna-be who is their mortal enemy.

Henson's effects are up to snuff, the creatures interacting believably with the humans if you can accept jiving turtles with a taste for pizza. The film doesn't make the mistake George Lucas made with *HOWARD THE DUCK*—there's no stripping away of the satirical bent of the comic books. But the number one priority here is action, not wit. It's a good kid's picture, but it's also pretty much for the kids.

●● Daniel M. Kimmel

## THE WITCHES

Directed by Nicolas Roeg. Warner Bros., 2/90, 95 mins. With: Anjelica Huston, Mai Zetterling, Rowan Atkinson, Jenny Runacre.

Director Nicolas Roeg's most accessible film since *DON'T LOOK NOW* (1973) is a sheer joy. Roald Dahl's off-beat fable successfully emerges from all the hubble, bubble, toil, and trouble of post-production woes as a slick, sick enchantment with all the writer's oddball charm intact. The story—a boy on holiday foiling a plan to turn children into mice by a convention of witches spiking candy with a magic potion—is simplistic but brilliantly realized with a hard-to-resist, winning charm, plus trademark flourishes by Roeg in top form. The off-the-wall atmosphere is admirably complemented by the best, uncluttered special effects Jim Henson's Creature Shop has yet created: real mice are superbly intercut with their talking puppet counterparts. Making the brew even more bewitching is the high camp performance of the year by Anjelica Huston as the ultra-evil lead sorceress.

It's scary, it's funny, it's delightfully different and it's as on the edge as Dahl's *WILLY WONKA AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY* (1971). This is one fantasy frolic Henson and Co. can be proud of, so it's hard to understand why Dahl reportedly hates it so much. ●●● Alan Jones

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA Charles Dance, with Teri Polo.



# REVIEWS

## A cold war swan song to nuclear Armageddon

### THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER

A Paramount Pictures release of a Mace Neufeld/Jerry Sherlock production. 2/90, 137 mins. In Dolby & color. Director, John McTiernan. Producer, Neufeld. Executive producers, Larry De Waay & Sherlock. Director of photography, Jan De Bont. Editors, Dennis Virkler & John Wright. Production design, Terrence Marsh. Art directors, Dianne Wager, Donald Woodruff & William Cruise. Special visual effects, Industrial Light & Magic (supervisor, Scott Squires). Undersea submarines, Boss Film Corp. Set designer, Mickey S. Michaels. Music, Basil Poledouris. Sound, Richard Bryce Goodman. Screenplay by Larry Ferguson & Donald Stewart, based on the novel by Tom Clancy.

Capt. Marko Ramius ..... Sean Connery  
Jack Ryan ..... Alec Baldwin  
Capt. Bart Mancuso ..... Scott Glenn  
Capt. Borodin ..... Sam Neill  
Admiral Greer ..... James Earl Jones  
Andrei Lysenko ..... Joss Ackland  
Jeffrey Pelt ..... Richard Jordan  
Ivan Putin ..... Peter Firth  
Dr. Petrov ..... Tim Curry  
Seaman Jones ..... Courtney B. Vance  
Capt. Tupolev ..... Stellan Skarsgard  
Skip Tyler ..... Jeffrey Jones

by Thomas Doherty

The end of the Cold War is going to play hell with the espionage thriller. In bringing Tom Clancy's bestseller to the screen, Paramount has had to *backdate* the action to a pre-Gorby era—which must mark something of a first because “what if?” scenarios are usually future subjunctive. Much of the excitement surrounding THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER is almost elegiac—a last salute to the certainties of a bipolar world, of commie scum and imperialist pigs, before we're all bored to tears by peaceful coexistence and bear hugs.

The plot grafts the New Fron-

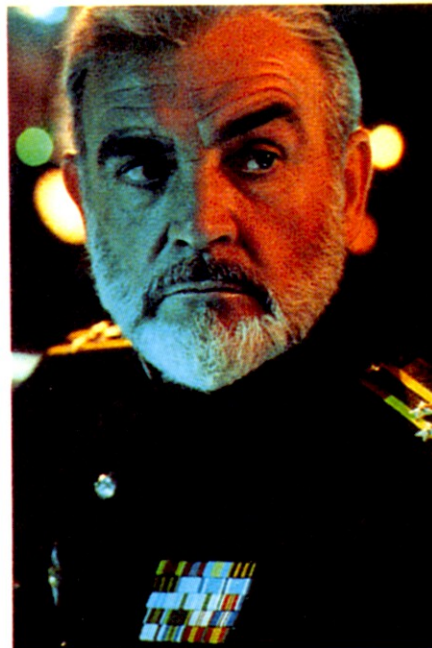
tier onto the Age of Reagan. A defecting Soviet sub commander, Ramius (Sean Connery), spirits off the prize vessel in the Soviet fleet, a nuclear-powered baby with brass interiors and a top secret propulsion system that makes it purr like a kitten. Clancy's cold-war scenario is complex, but a film whose plot synopsis demands more space than a postage stamp has its rewards. In fact, the film's unhurried expository confidence and intelligent plotting is its most endearing quality. Of course, it helps if you've read the book, but if you haven't, it just means you have to pay attention—which explains why those restless dolts behind you keep jammering over what's happening.

THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER oozes crisp, masculine professionalism—especially in the figures of Connery as the dauntless and determined submariner and the leathery Scott Glenn as his American counterpart Bart Mancuso. Up against these dudes, poor Alec Baldwin as CIA operative Jack Ryan is totally smothered, the Clancy-surrogate forever thrust into the midst of big power countdowns.

Director John McTiernan, who scored artistically with PREDATOR and commercially with DIE HARD, stays true to Clancy's military ethos. He gives the sub sets a sharp, metallic sheen and deploys

the Panavision frame to maximum elongated overdrive ('scope was made for subs). In order to dispense with those bothersome subtitles, McTiernan cops a gimmick from Stanley Kramer in JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG: the camera moves in on a Russian-speaking character and the man suddenly flips into English. Neither the Red October nor its American counterpart feels very claustrophobic—the director probably figured DAS BOOT owned the franchise on stuffy interiors. He runs a tight ship, though, utterly refusing to pander to the laser-and-lights crowd. Not only are there absolutely no full-tilt effects showstoppers, but the single most explosive piece of footage is an apparently documentary shot in videotape of a jet wiping out on the deck of an aircraft carrier.

Adapting Clancy's intricate plot and data-laden prose to the screen must have been an editorial nightmare. Writers Larry Ferguson and Donald Stewart have managed to cut without eviscerating. The pair have retained the essentials that make Clancy's novels click: the compelling mastery of the details of military intelligence and the chess-like strategies of computer-coded war. No question, the man has his satellite overpasses and multiple-targeted re-entry vehicles down pat. On the



Connery as Ramius, recalling James Mason as Jules Verne's Captain Nemo.

other hand, his characters are basically like Ron Kovic before shrapnel. In this sense, they actually benefit from incarnation by flesh-and-blood actors who can give them nuance and dimension. All are more vivid, more fully dimensional than their book versions. The second-tier people, never more than brushstrokes in the books, are also fully figured: Sam Neil as the Russkie second-in-command registers strongly as a man wistfully anticipating his

continued on page 61

## How Special Effects Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows

Those scanning the credits for THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER may have been surprised to see the names of both ILM and Boss Film in the special effects crawl. It's the first time the two competing visual effects giants have worked together—sort of. It won't be the last.

ILM is credited for the film's “special visual effects” and is trumpeted in the film's press notes. Boss Film is credited for building the miniature “undersea submarines” but isn't even

The U.S.S. Dallas breaks through the surface, a spectacular effect. It should be, it's a real submarine.

mentioned in those notes.

Actually, some of the visual effects seen in the movie were filmed by Boss—notably the DSRV—but Paramount pulled the effects filming away from Boss last August and handed it over to ILM. Said a spokesperson for Richard Edlund's Boss Film, “We built the models and turned them over to ILM and that's it. There is no controversy.”

A source at Boss stressed that there was no animosity between Boss and ILM, and that the switch was mandated by the “powers that be at Paramount.” Boss, they said, was the victim of effects politics, the trend at

Paramount and other major studios to spread around the effects work to a number of suppliers to maintain control.

While this allows a studio to apply leverage to get what it wants by engaging in power plays, it has also resulted—in Paramount's case—in visibly shoddy effects work on both THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER and last year's STAR TREK V. Witness the blue screen river sequence at the end of THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER, credited to The Chandler Group, with the background clearly visible through Sean Connery's nose. □



Showcases the 'Breed and the bleed, but doesn't quite succeed

NIGHTBREED

A 20th Century-Fox release of a James G. Robinson and Joe Roth presentation of a Morgan Creek production. 2/90, 99 mins. In Dolby & color. Director, Clive Barker. Producer, Gabriella Martinelli. Executive producers, Robinson & Roth. Director of photography, Robin Vidgeon. Editors, Richard Marden & Mark Goldblatt. Production design, Steve Hardie. Art director, Ricky Eyles. Special makeup & visual effects, Image Animation. Special makeup designers, Bob Keen & Geoff Portass. Special makeup (L.A.), Tony Gardner. Creature supervision, Simon Sayce. Special effects supervisor, Chris Corbulo. Animated optical effects, VCE (supervisor, Peter Kuran). Model unit director, Julian Parry. Costume designers, Ann Hollowood & Marie France. Music, Danny Elfman. Sound, Bruce Nyznik. Screenplay by Barker, based on his novel "Cabal."

Aaron Boone ..... Craig Sheffer  
Lori ..... Anne Bobby  
Dr. Philip Decker ..... David Cronenberg  
Capt. Eigerman ..... Charles Haid  
Det. Joyce ..... Hugh Quarshie  
Narcisse ..... Hugh Ross  
Lylesberg ..... Doug Bradley

by Thomas Doherty

Clive Barker may not be the future of horror, but he's sure got a hammerlock on the present. The Liverpoolian spawn of H. P. Lovecraft and Tod Browning is the bucket of blood fave of the moment, the great red hope of horror film, fiction, and ancillary marketing. His short story collections are a witches' cauldron of antediluvian paganism, medieval Christianity, welfare state nihilism, and punk fashion. In Barkerville, yuppies in Volvos get ripped apart by Rawhead Rex on the English moors.

Barker's latest multimedia assault (read the paperback, skim the comic book) is NIGHTBREED, an atmospheric horrorfest that raises hell with a menagerie of misfit monsters from the mythical kingdom of Midian. Forgoing neither the standard twist (the denizens of the deep are a lot more nurturing and civilized than the creepy and cruel normals topside) nor the requisite quotient of twistedness (gobs of organ shredding and flesh rending), the film exuberantly showcases the 'Breed and the bleed, but it doesn't quite succeed. Barker's cut-to-the-chase impatience forestalls any

Fox promoted the film with images of David Cronenberg, looking like a fugitive from a cheap Italian slashfest.



A 'Breed trio, three of the film's plethora of imaginative monsters by Bob Keen and Geoff Portass of Image Animation. Right: A Ralph McQuarrie-designed matte of Midian, a cemetery-topped subterranean city sitting on an Alberta prairie.

better gander at some of these fancifully horrid monstrosities—stomach-faced beasts, blue meanies, and rabbit children.

Three stand out from the pack. Narcisse (Hugh Ross) is a wry devil-may-care madman who gives himself an awful skin-shredding facelift, literally. He is a gleeful hoot as Boone's ironic guide into 'Breed culture. As a superfreak in the Rick James sense, Rachel (Catherine Chevalier) brings some welcome sultriness to what are some woefully undersexed proceedings. And finally the raspy-voiced raver Peloquin is one dude who really enjoys his bad breeding. John Agar has an unbilled cameo as an old codger



connection with his beset protagonist or his fanciful creatures. Above and below, day and night, this is a freak show.

An introductory home invasion/murder serves as an appetizer to the main course of action brutality. Young and hunky Boone (Craig Sheffer) thinks he might be the slasher killer. Tormented by prophetic nightmares and saddled with an understanding but dense girlfriend (Anne Bobby), Boone seeks treatment with a psychotherapist, Dr. Decker (David Cronenberg), even more deranged than he is. (On second thought, Boone must be disturbed—one look at the doc's high tech sleazoid office decor would send any patient in his right mind rushing out the door.) Boone follows his premonitions through Alberta Province to a spooky cemetery and an underground encampment of ragtag mutations. Despite the spoilsport squawking of one monster ("It is not The Law!"), the Medusa-like Paloquin (Oliver Parker) chomps on Boone and infects him with Nightbreed rabies.

Ventilated by a fusillade of police bullets, Boone finds death only a temporary setback. He soon earns induction into the subterranean Nightbreed fellowship, a genetic minority group with le-

gitimate beefs against mainstream human culture. (A witchcraft-through-the-ages montage chronicles a pageant of persecutions by priests and disgruntled peasants. It's a visually inventive showstopper.) Since assimilation has proven a bust, the Nightbreed occupy a sub-cemetery cavern, keep out of the sun, and obey their own quirky codes. Bent on disrupting the community is the demented Decker, the real serial killer-slasher in his off-hours, and the local town sheriff Eigerman (Charles Haid), a homicidal slug in the manner of horror film law enforcement. A born savage messiah, the new kid under the block will lead the breed in battle against Decker, Eigerman, and the local paramilitary citizenry for the upbeat Armageddon finale.

The film works best underground, in the netherworld refuge populated by the title creatures, a demographically varied collection of changelings, mutants, freaks, and abominations. No wonder the credit list for the Image Animation crew and model unit is longer than the Calgary phone book. As in the bar scene in STAR WARS, the sheer scale of inventiveness and the evident work lavished on creatures who fill mere seconds of screen time is impressive—one wants to rewind the film to get a

who doesn't get any older.

As for Canada's most original director, go figure. Cronenberg is having a good time in the Donald Sutherland role, but he's clearly slumming, and one wonders at his motives. Maybe he wants to live down totally Martin Scorsese's oft-quoted line about him looking like a Beverly Hills gynecologist—which he actually played in INTO THE NIGHT. Wearing a leather-face-by-way-of-Jason face mask, he slices, dices, and cuts into the 'Breed with a zeal that would do Robert Englund proud. But we all know which side of the viewfinder this guy really belongs on.

The finale is loads of laughs, but setting the film in Canada works against true dementia and crowd frenzy, the Cronenberg tradition notwithstanding. Not to sound jingoistic, but bloodthirsty vigilantes, brutal sheriffs, and deracinated rednecks armed with shotguns seem so... American. They didn't call it "Alberta Chainsaw Massacre."

The coda promises, actually threatens, a sequel, so all these guys will be reprising their prosthetic devices in something like NIGHTBREED II: THE BREED BREEDS. If it's to NIGHTBREED what HELLRAISER II was to HELLRAISER, lock the cellar doors. □



## How Fox Bungled NIGHTBREED Per Clive Barker

By Alan Jones

Is it the "HEAVEN'S GATE of horror" as dubbed by *Variety*? Or is it the gateway to horror heaven for admirers of Clive Barker's fantasy universe? The impartial view of NIGHTBREED lies somewhere between those extreme poles. Sure the movie had problems. Barker is the first to admit it. But despite everything, Barker is proud of the screen re-invention of his best-selling novel *Cabal*. NIGHTBREED is the film he set out to make—the one he visualized in his head during months of preproduction. Yet he's still shocked and dazed at his treatment by Hollywood and from the total boxoffice rejection his labor of love received.

"Twelve million dollars isn't a lot by Hollywood standards," said Barker, back in London from Los Angeles to ensure that NIGHTBREED gets a fairer crack at European markets. "But while HELLRAISER was like making a home movie, NIGHTBREED meant I had to deal with Fox—a major studio, Morgan Creek—a middleman company, and Chris Figg, my producer and ex-partner, who was gone after the first six weeks. Chris had budgeted the movie too optimistically. He left the production to chase its tail right up until the last minute because his budget didn't take into account what was on the page. When I discovered the movie was going to cost more I was in shock."

Once Figg was given his walking papers by Morgan Creek, the production company installed Gabriella Martinelli in London to sort out the budget mess. "There were all kinds of opticals and mattes that hadn't been accounted for," said Barker. "The full-scale consequences of Image Animation's massive [makeup effects] contribution hadn't been thought through properly. These cash flow nightmares happen all the time. But never to me!"

Beyond the budget problems and cost overruns, Barker said his first cut of NIGHTBREED didn't test well, prompting three days of extra shooting in Los Angeles. David Cronenberg was called back to beef up his part as Decker, and a new character was added, played by '50s B-movie veteran John Agar.

"I couldn't believe we were

auditioning *the John Agar*," said Barker. "David [Cronenberg], who loves his work in NIGHTBREED by the way, was really impressed too. We cut the sequences into the picture and tested it at Redondo Beach to a fabulous response with great preview cards. Tim Burton came along and liked it a lot too. We've got it right, I thought. The preview process was invaluable in making the movie slicker, faster, stranger, and more intense. Explanations were dropped which weren't needed and Fox was happy."

So what went wrong? Barker said that Fox failed to market the movie properly, making it look like a slasher film. Barker chalks that up to the fact that no one really understood what the movie was about. Laughed Barker, "Someone at Morgan Creek said to me, 'You know Clive, if you're not careful some people are going to like the monsters.' Talk about completely missing the point! Even the company I was making the film for couldn't comprehend what I was trying to achieve!"

Except one person—Morgan Creek co-founder and executive producer Joe Roth, who bought Barker's book in manuscript form and saw it through several script drafts, one of which Barker penned with uncredited Mark Frost, David Lynch's partner on TWIN PEAKS. But Roth left Morgan Creek to head Fox. "That enormous management job put him on a level which made NIGHTBREED and his former concerns look pretty petty," said Barker. "I don't blame him, people move on. But I looked to Joe for a lot of opinions and suddenly he

wasn't accessible anymore. The Fox publicity department said, 'We know how to market movies, leave the trailer and poster campaign to us. We've heard your opinion that the movie is strange and needs special attention—but you're wrong!'"

Barker questioned Fox's decision not to show NIGHTBREED to critics or allow him to do publicity interviews, a mistaken approach that stemmed from what Barker termed the studio's "condescension toward the people who see genre movies." Said Barker, "Again and again I listened to deprecating comments about low audience intelligence and their literacy levels. There was supposedly no point showing NIGHTBREED to critics because the people who see these movies don't read reviews, in brackets, *even if they can read at all!* Immediately it was disqualified from serious criticism. Therefore it had to be sold to the lowest common denominator. Nobody cares for the product I, and a host of other horror directors, make.

"One [old] guy at Fox never saw it through once because he felt it was morally reprehensible and disgusting—the two very things it's not. Their imaginations are limited and they have a very unadventurous sense of what to do. It's far easier to sell a pastiche than a wholly original film like NIGHTBREED as there's a set of stylistic precedents. When something different comes along, you have to invent a new vocabulary to put it in the marketplace. And they can't be bothered. They don't respect the audience it was made for, therefore there's a



Barker directs a scene set in Midian's lower depths where the 'Breed worship a statue of their god, Baphomet.

built-in resistance to caring about it. It isn't just sour grapes on my part. I'm not bitching about this for my sake. It's a shameful situation. It's a small comfort but Fox did admit they got the campaign wrong. That took a lot of guts. It doesn't help much in retrospect though. New World could have sold it better than they did."

Despite the critical lambasting, the studio recriminations, the fact he tore up his three picture contract in a fury, and the poor boxoffice figures, Barker revealed Morgan Creek still wants to make NIGHTBREED 2. Said Barker, "Like HELLRAISER, NIGHTBREED will be big on home video so they'll make their money back."

Looking back on the whole experience, Barker feels he gave NIGHTBREED his best shot. "All you can do is make the movie your way," he said. "The lesson I've learned is that a lot of people don't want anything different. They don't want you to have a unique vision. But why make movies anybody else could have done? Well, I've paid the consequences, but I'm unrepentant." □

A 'Breed extra, one of dozens meticulously crafted by Image Animation.



## "Nice" horror, a calculated throwback to '50s monster movies

### TREMORS

A Universal Pictures release of a No Frills/Wilson-Maddock production. 1/90, 96 mins. In Dolby & color. Director, Ron Underwood. Producers, S. S. Wilson & Brent Maddock. Executive producer, Gale Anne Hurd. Director of photography, Alexander Gruszynski. Editor, O. Nicholas Brown. Production design, Ivo Cristante. Art director, Don Maskovich. Creature effects, Tom Woodruff, Jr., & Alec Gillis. Set designer, Paul Ford. Music, Ernest Troost. Sound, Steve Flick & Richard Anderson. Screenplay by Wilson, Maddock, based on a story by Wilson, Maddock & Underwood.

Valentine McKee ..... Kevin Bacon  
Earl Basset ..... Fred Ward  
Rhonda LeBeck ..... Finn Carter  
Burt Gummer ..... Michael Gross  
Heather Gummer ..... Reba McEntire  
Melvin Plug ..... Bobby Jacoby  
Nancy ..... Charlotte Stewart  
Miquel ..... Tony Genaro

by Charles D. Leayman

"Nice" is not a word one normally applies to a horror film (nor would wish to). The genre at its best shouts blood, guts, sex, subversion, and a (hopefully) progressive disruption of the status quo. But "nice" is exactly what director Ron Underwood and scenarist S. S. Wilson and Brent Maddock have produced with *TREMORS*, a calculated throwback to the '50s "monster movies" that fans (at whatever age) presumably devoured with rapture.

Or so one might infer from the film's mainstream reviews, which bestowed approval on *TREMORS* more for its folksy lack of genuine disturbance than for any achieved *frissons*. For *USA Today's*

Facing down the business end of the "graboids," a blast from horror's past.



Amiable Fred Ward and Kevin Bacon, managing to outsmart an underground slug.

reviewer, "Not since *ALIEN* has there been a creature feature that so well honors the genre" (but in what way?). Only the customarily witty Michael Musto of *The Village Voice* had the imagination and cultural savvy to suggest that *TREMORS'* burrowing slugs might "well be the ultimate image of '80s yuppie greed," which at least imputes a social subtext to the movie's supposed mimicry.

*TREMORS* in fact is like lunch at McDonald's: fun going down, but forgettable just a few hours later. The U.S.C. Film School grads who made it obviously know their cinematic precedents, but the package they've so artfully concocted self-destructs on its own breeziness. Their bid for sunny, unthreatening nostalgia pushes all the right buttons for building up and releasing pleasurable scary tension. But viewers old enough to have already gotten a dose of this from *THEM* (1954), *THE DEADLY MANTIS* (1957), and even Bert I. Gordon's ingratiatingly tacky *BEGINNING OF THE END* (1957), will recall the eerie, *chiaroscuro* power that such oddly potent programmers exerted on impressionable young minds. And even younger, allegedly more sophisticated viewers, can appreciate these works as clever displacements of post-Hiroshima angst and McCarthy-era paranoia.

By contrast, *TREMORS*, though amiably accomplished in its by-the-numbers way, lacks even a shred of self-conscious social metaphor (Musto notwithstanding), and thus comes off like an irrepressible puppy at a time

when such grisly fare as *LEATHERFACE* and *NIGHTBREED* are diving ever deeper in the political, psychosexual swamp.

*TREMORS'* story of knock-about handymen Kevin Bacon and Fred Ward, and pretty seismologist Finn Carter, has some genuine (if limited) enjoyments. The moldering western town which production designer Ivo Cristante built from scratch on location carries a quiet charge of cowboy myth that adds to the story's tall-tale charm. Alexander Gruszynski's buoyantly corn-fed photography puts a Deluxe color gloss on the agoraphobic desert that Jack Arnold once rhapsodized (in black-and-white, of course) in *TARANTULA* (1955) and *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE* (1953). And wayward moments linger in the memory, especially a besieged station-wagon's submerging headlights glimpsed with dire poetry over nocturnal hills. Or Bacon, Ward, and Carter's lithe pole-vaulting from rock to rock in a game attempt to outwit the waiting slugs' hypersensitive hearing.

Perhaps the single key to *TREMORS'* commercial acceptance lies with its amiably understated performances. Bacon and Ward share a testy camaraderie that plays like a well-worn country ballad heard just before closing time. Indeed, their lazy, jeans-and-boots friendship cues the movie's whole tone: *TREMORS* is after unruffled, baby-boomer fun, not post-modern erudition or post-nuclear dread. Equally satisfying are Michael Gross

and country singer Reba McEntire as a pair of war-ready survivalists who find in the graboids a militaristic *raison d'etre*.

The "creature effects" designed by Tom Woodruff, Jr., and Alec Gillis are gorily impressive and kept to the right degree of visibility. Their blindly driven predators irresistibly evoke *DUNE's* "spice-worms" while exuding a paleolithic aura indigenous to the American West. With Cthulhu-esque tentacles and gaping, toothy suckers (along with a much-remarked smelliness), the graboids ably embody the nightmarish Otherness that the fantasy genre exists to both celebrate and loathe.

Any film on which Gale Anne Hurd serves as producer (including *THE TERMINATOR*, *ALIENS*, *ALIEN NATION*, and *THE ABYSS*) is bound to exhibit polished production values, and *TREMORS* is no exception. (As the publicity hand-outs note, it's the first time Hurd has displayed her monsters to the light of day, having heretofore worked the night shift of dark interiors and dense *mise en scene*.) Underwood has directed over 150 short films, and his sureness of touch is evident throughout *TREMORS*: he knows the value of what's left unseen, but energetically orchestrates the confrontational moments when they come. His longtime collaborators, Wilson and Maddock, have demonstrated their flair for sentimental genre comedy in scripts for *SHORT CIRCUIT* and *BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED*: in *TREMORS*, they jettison the sentiment and go for the old-fashioned thrills.

But it's the very sickness of *TREMORS* that finally undoes it, at least in terms of lasting impact. Prescriptive though it might sound, one suspects that the best genre features must ultimately be about something more than their makers' film school reminiscences, be it sex, love, death, afterlife, nothingness. As effortlessly enjoyable and in-joke as it is, *TREMORS* finally recalls only its proficient creators' late-night bullsessions about the golden oldies of the past. All it misses is what made those seemingly artless ventures so mesmerizingly disturbing to a post-atomic generation: a genuine sense of dread. □

## Grand exploration of another world that is truly spectacular

### FOR ALL MANKIND

An Apollo Associates/FAM Productions, Inc. 1/90, 80 mins. Director, Al Reinert. Executive producers, Fred W. Miller & Ben Young Mason. Producers, Betsy Broyles Breier & Reinert. Co-producer, David W. Litner. Editor, Susan Korda. Music, Brian Eno, Roger Eno & Dan Lanois. Narrators, James A. Lovell, Jr., Russell L. Schweickart, Eugene A. Cernan, Michael Collins, Charles Conrad, Jr., Richard F. Gordon, Jr., Alan L. Bean, John L. Swigert, Jr., Stuart A. Roosa, James B. Irwin, T. Kenneth Mattingly II, Charles M. Duke, Jr., Harrison H. Schmitt.

by Dan Perez

As I watched FOR ALL MANKIND, I was amazed at how awe-struck I felt. It was the sort of thrill I felt during the cat-and-mouse chase through the asteroids in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. But this feeling was much more genuine, since what I was watching wasn't a flight of fancy. It was the real thing. Much of the footage of the Apollo moon missions in FOR ALL MANKIND is over 20 years old, but it still has power. Director/producer Al Reinert felt that power ten years ago, as he watched short 16mm films taken by the Apollo astronauts on the missions, screened at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. Reinert found himself asking why no one had ever combined those clips into a feature-length movie.

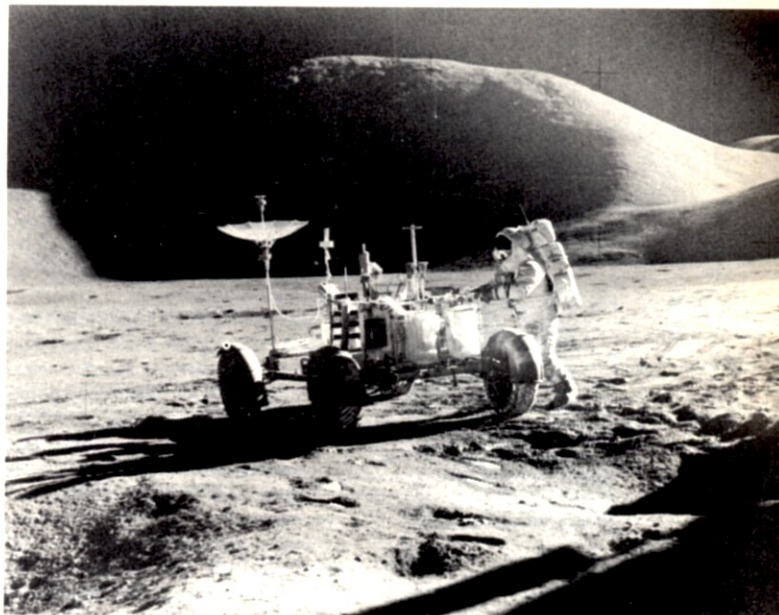
The initial idea led Reinert, then a contributing editor for *Texas Monthly* magazine, to embark on a massive project which involved viewing six million feet of film shot during the nine moon missions, and which (as funding dried up periodically) took ten years to complete. The result is a startlingly evocative documentary called FOR ALL MANKIND. I hesitate to use the word documentary to describe the film, for fear of conjuring up images of some dry, pedantic, themeless treatise about the space program. FOR ALL MANKIND is not that. Its great appeal is its offbeat narrative structure, which blends the individual missions into one seamless *gestalt*: a grand exploration of another world.

To achieve this effect, Reinert abandoned many of the traditional documentary conventions, such as "talking head" shots of scientists, technicians, or astronauts. There *is* voiceover narration by the astronauts, but we're never told who is speaking (until the closing credits), and the astronauts talk less about the nuts-and-bolts aspect of space travel, focus-

ing instead on their memories of the journey itself. Having had years to reflect on their experiences, the astronauts offer commentary which is sometimes maudlin, sometimes poetic, but which nearly always conveys a genuine sense of grandeur and awe.

The astronauts give FOR ALL MANKIND a quiet sense of humanity amidst what was then (and still is, in many ways) a pinnacle of technology. And that technology is shown as never before, from the gleaming white tower of the Saturn launch vehicle, as seen from the elevator carrying the astronauts to its top, to the fragile-looking, spider-like Lunar Excursion Module. We're also shown footage of Mission Control—where the clothing and hairstyles remind us of just how much time has passed since we explored the moon—with its myriad banks of monitors and computers.

Reinert was faced with special problems in putting together the film. All the original color reversal stock (specially designed for the missions by Eastman Kodak) could not, by law, be removed from the Johnson Space Center in Houston. So Reinert and his production crew, in order to blow up the 16mm footage to a more pleasing 35mm for theatre audiences, were forced to build a special optical printer on-site at JSC.



The real thing: striking documentary footage of NASA's lunar rover on the moon.

The results are spectacular: the now-familiar "Earthrise" sequences are breathtaking, as are the scenes of stage separations, extravehicular activity, and docking. And the shots of the actual moon exploration, as the astronauts gambol across the lunar surface on foot and aboard the Lunar Rover, are as captivating as ever. This isn't some Hollywood special effect we're watching: these men are scrambling for their lives thousands of miles away from the Earth. Quite simply, this footage has never been seen like this before. The Dolby soundtrack is clear and crisp, and rounding things out is a serene, contempla-

tive score by *avant garde* composer Brian Eno.

The Apollo program cost approximately \$42 billion, and sent 24 Americans to the moon. It combined the talents and resources of the largest number of people in history for an undertaking not associated with war. While these statistics are impressive, FOR ALL MANKIND doesn't dwell on them. Instead, it tells a compelling story of exploration, of humankind's first steps into a frontier which still beckons us each night. It's a satisfying and tantalizing look at how far we've gone, and how far we have yet to go. □

### Synthesizing Nine Moon Missions Into One Seamless Gestalt

By Dan Perez

When FOR ALL MANKIND producer and director Al Reinert saw the NASA 16mm footage taken on the moon missions, his initial reaction was to ask himself why no one had ever turned the footage into a big-screen movie. "We've seen little dribs and drabs of it on television over the years," he recalled, "but not only is the quality poor, because they're copies of copies of copies, and washed out on television, but the sheer scope of the story doesn't seem impressive or even believable when



Director Al Reinert

you see it on television. I always felt this film should be on the big screen."

And when Reinert talked to the astronauts, years after their missions, he was struck by their recollections of personal moments and high points. "By catching them years later, they were actually more interesting to talk to," he said. Reinert formulated a narrative structure that would bind together the NASA footage of different missions into the grand feature he envisioned. "There are nine missions to the moon," said Reinert, "and I see them all

as basically the same trip. As history rolls by, it becomes a matter of trivia that there were nine. But those flights *together* were the first time human beings have left this planet to go somewhere else, and that's much more significant."

Even more important, Reinert concluded, is what the missions meant to him as a whole. "What's meaningful about the experience of Apollo," he said, "is that landing on the moon is not really what was most significant. The moon is just the first place you can stop. It's leaving the Earth that matters, and in years to come, who knows where we'll go as human beings? There's a lot of territory out there." □

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## DICK TRACY EFFECTS

continued from page 42

ual Services) from a private collector more akin in size, said Ellenshaw, to the trains seen at the Old Train exhibition near the Los Angeles Zoo. Two-feet in height and 40-feet long, it ran on a track in a 150x35-foot scale train yard and weighed, according to Ellenshaw, at least a ton. Moreover, although it had a steam motor, the train required a more manageable form of propulsion in order to be matched to various matte and steam elements.

The propulsion problem was solved by attaching the train to a computer-controlled servo-motor. The motor was decoupled from the axles, and was used only to contribute puffs of smoke. The smoke was later shot as a distinct component at a speed of 60 frames per second. The problem was, however, that the train worked up considerable momentum, and placing the camera in front of it in the hope that the locomotive would stop its rush before smashing it underneath was not something Stetson and colleagues wished to chance. They solved this problem, explained Ellenshaw, by placing a mirror on the track and shooting the train's reflection.

The business of the miniature ferry boat and drawbridge sequence, which occurs at the end of the picture, was a tad less complex. For one thing, there was no worry about water ripples engulfing the miniatures—Stetson, explained Ellenshaw, substituted plexiglass for the water. □

## TOTAL RECALL

continued from page 9

tential voyage of self-discovery in a manner that is still light-hearted and entertaining."

If audiences buy Schwarzenegger, they'll still have to swallow TOTAL RECALL's "red planet Mars" setting. The film's anachronistic, scientifically inaccurate view of our planetary neighbor is straight out of '50s B-movies and pulp science fiction in an age when NASA has all but set foot on the planet. Such a cliched handling of Mars seems especially inexcusable when you consider that TOTAL RECALL had at its disposal the design input of Ron Cobb, the celebrated conceptual artist of STAR WARS, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, and ALIEN.

"I thought it would be much more interesting to have the characters on a scientifically accurate planet Mars, rather than a fantasy Mars, with two big, bloated moons," said Cobb. "The real Mars is extraordinarily cold and tremendously arid. It is much like

the moon in many ways, with pinkish skies and orange dust. The two moons, of course, would in reality be very disappointing because they would be visible as just two little fast moving dots across the Martian sky."

Steve Burg, a TOTAL RECALL production illustrator who elaborated many of Cobb's designs after Cobb left the production, suggested that realistic design work on the project may have been a casualty of Verhoeven's directorial vision. "We were definitely making Paul's film," said Burg. "I was generating images that he wanted to see. Some of the images are a bit different than I would have done."

Burg's boss, production designer William Sandell, countered that assertion. "Verhoeven was very open when we presented drawings to him," said Sandell. "Once we had our concepts down to where Paul felt comfortable, we all were in sync on the vision of the architecture and the lighting, and all of that. Paul pretty much stepped back and let us do our thing—unless something went awry. Then he was right there. He is an extremely bright man, and extremely demanding. If he has confidence in you, you can really get a chance to do some interesting things. And he had confidence in us."

But Cobb thinks TOTAL RECALL and science fiction films in general, have missed the boat by being too timid in their extrapolation of the possibilities of technology. As an example Cobb cited TOTAL RECALL's "mole," a burrowing vehicle that travels beneath the Martian surface in the film. "They wanted great big drilling bits," laughed Cobb, "[technology] from the 19th century! I wanted to use what I call a fusion torch, a kind of controlled fusion, with the capacity to vaporize rock, and pump plasmas around, and thus have a device that could really move through the ground.

"A certain amount of attention should have been given to the actual forces involved, and the way that a thing like our mole would grip a tunnel," said Cobb. "The tunnels that the moles were supposed to dig were rectangular, so I put running treads on the top and bottom." The top threads were later taken off the vehicle during filming in Mexico. "Basically, the moles turned into clanking tanks," said Cobb. "There's not a lot of interest in that."

Despite TOTAL RECALL's apparent lapses in verisimilitude, both Cobb and Burg are confident the film will be a success, at the boxoffice and otherwise. "I've always loved the TOTAL RECALL project," said Cobb, who also

designed the Disney version that never got made. "I think Verhoeven's version is going to be very good. It was quite a change to accommodate Arnold [Schwarzenegger], and I think they did a good job writing him in.

"The introduction of Arnold initially diminished the capacity of the film to be considered good because of the bizarre distortion to accommodate him," said Cobb. "I thought the film had gone down the toilet. Now, I'm beginning to think that they may have actually salvaged the movie. If it still has some of the qualities that I liked best about the script, and they've integrated Arnold into it, they're going to have the best of both worlds. It could do very well. And Arnold's getting better and better all the time." □

## LEGION

continued from page 13

ally taken possession of a living body?

Blatty said directing EXORCIST III was no great challenge after previously helming THE NINTH CONFIGURATION. "Casting a film well is 70% of it," he said of directing, then added, "What I've done both times is spend my first six weeks blocking, before I stepped on the set. That gives me a great feeling of security—because if inspiration doesn't come, I've got my plan to fall back on."

Blatty called working with George C. Scott "a great experience" and said of the Kinderman role, "I think many people will be surprised, They're going to see a different aspect of George Scott—extremely vulnerable. It's quite a spiritual performance. I expect he'll be nominated—this time, I hope he accepts if he wins!"

Morgan Creek's decision to expand the movie's title to THE EXORCIST III: LEGION may lead audiences to expect a more direct sequel (previous titles included THE EXORCIST: 1990 and THE EXORCIST: THE NEXT CHAPTER). "That they will not get," said Blatty. "What they will get is a link, a very strong one, to the first film, and there will be an exorcism. It's not the full-blown third act, but it is part of the resolution."

Because Blatty wanted to film the new exorcism without recreating special effects from the original film, he saved the sequence for post-production in Hollywood, even though it involves one of his principal actors, Nicol Williamson, as the priest. "This was not something I was going to shoot in Wilmington, North Carolina, as fine as those craftsman are," he explained. "Quite frankly, at the



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time we were shooting there, I hadn't dreamed up the scene yet or the effects. So I said, 'Until I think of the right thing, it's not in the picture.'"

Returning to Hollywood, Blatty scripted the new scene "in meticulous detail, angle for angle, shot for shot," then turned it over to a storyboard artist for visual translation. "It's rather elaborate," said Blatty of the new scene. "We're spending a lot of money on it. A lot. Over \$4 million. We're going to repeat nothing that was in THE EXORCIST. It will be shorter, compacted into a very brief period of time so the effects come at you like dum-dum bullets."

Although reluctant to reveal details about the new effects, filmed live on the set, Blatty recalled an amusing story about a shot in which the room is filled with a low sea of flame and is teeming with cobras. "Last Wednesday morning, our effects coordinator received a call from the owner and handler of a cobra named Joe, who said, 'Look, I'm sorry about this. The money is good, and it's a swell opportunity in every other way; but my wife and I talked this through, looking at all sides of it, and we both felt we really don't want Joe to be in an EXORCIST film.'"

Blatty laughed, "What must be the reputation of the film? I guess people are afraid that their cobra would get jinxed. Many people to this day have never seen the original and won't go see it. I don't know why. Maybe because it dealt with a child. I'm sure that will be true of THE GUARDIAN as well."

It is ironic that this reputation applies to the work of a man who was, until publication of *The Exorcist*, a writer of comedies,

including four screenplays for Blake Edwards. "There came a time when comedy dried up in town, and I couldn't get work," remembered Blatty. "People would say, 'Blatty—dramatic?' So I had nothing else to do, and I thought this could be the time to demonstrate that I can write something other than comedy, if necessary. Then the immediate result was that my entire body of work as a comedy writer and a comic novelist was obliterated. Now they say, 'Blatty—comedy?'" □

## TRACY FILMS

continued from page 47

more satisfying mystery plot. Another plus is the appearance of Gould's comic strip character Vitamin Flintheart, played by Ian Keith in a remarkable makeup job, the only one made to look like their strip counterpart.

Byrd's popularity in the Tracy role got RKO to hire him for their third feature, DICK TRACY'S DILEMMA, in 1947, and the film benefits from Byrd's more forceful melodramatic style. Kay Christopher plays Tess Trueheart, with Latell turning as Pat Patton, in a story that pits Tracy against The Claw (Jack Lambert), the head of an armed robbery gang who uses a hook for a right hand, and a weapon.

RKO's final Tracy film was DICK TRACY MEETS GRUESOME (1947), pitting Tracy against the bankrobber of the title played by veteran heavy Boris Karloff in a throwback to his early pre-monster gangster roles. Armed with a dangerous paralyzing gas, Karloff is quite good in a ruthless part and as an audience draw earned equal billing with Byrd in what proved to be the best of the feature film series.

The four RKO Tracy features are an interesting contrast to other mystery series of the period, like those featuring Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Moto, and Charlie Chan. Rather than facing a limited number of suspects in the films, Tracy always enters a case from the outside like a real policeman. Often the time we spend watching the criminals plot and betray one another is almost as long as we spend with Tracy. And if Tracy seems to have some lucky breaks in solving the cases, it is usually the kind of luck that only comes from good police work, checking everything twice.

A DICK TRACY television series premiered in September 1950 on ABC, with Byrd as Tracy, supported by Gould strip characters like Sam Catchem (Joe Devlin in the character's first film appearance) and Angela Greene as Tess Trueheart. Most of the 39 episodes filmed were written by M. C. Brook, who also wrote TV's CAPTAIN VIDEO, using a few villains from the strip such as the Mole, a counterfeiter who lived underground. At the time, the series was criticized for excessive violence, and after its cancellation in 1951 Byrd and Devlin continued to make Tracy films for TV until Byrd's sudden death in 1952.

In 1961 a series of short, limited animation cartoons were produced by UPA called THE ADVENTURES OF DICK TRACY in which the Tracy character appears only to assign cases to such cartoon figures as Hemlock Holmes and Joe Jitsu. In the years since, many producers purchased the film rights to Gould's strip from Tribune Media Services, but every deal fell through until Warren Beatty acquired the rights in 1986. □

## RED OCTOBER

continued from page 55

piece of the American dream. And Tim Curry is diverting playing his second Slavik doctor—Frank 'n' Furter was the first.

The project benefits mightily from what seems to be the willing cooperation of the entire U.S. Navy. ("I soon learned that Tom Clancy has fans in some very high places," producer Mace Neufeld observes coyly in the film's production notes.) Last seen in port in STAR TREK IV, the U.S.S. Enterprise makes another cameo appearance, as itself. All the on-deck footage is neat, but a rain-swept helicopter-to-submarine transfer is downright spectacular. The only time verisimilitude breaks down is when Connery's sub captain outfit and gray beard brings to mind James Mason as Captain Nemo.

Clancy's popularity was attributed to America's rightward tilt in the '80s, but a lot of it was purely generic. After two decades of deepseated suspicion of the CIA and the Department of Defense, the thriller had reversed the New Frontier stereotype for so long it had become the stereotype—the CIA was the standard breeding ground for villainy, betrayal, and bad manners. Clancy's audacious reversal was to make the hated CIA guys—and the ridiculed brass-hats and rejected enlisted men—the heroes. After THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR, TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING, and the entire Vietnam combat genre, THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER and *Red Star Rising* were bolts from nowhere—or maybe just from a starker red, white, and blue past.

As for the late Cold War, it was dramatic fun while it lasted. □

# LETTERS

## PHIL DONAHUE, WE'RE NOT

It was fascinating to read of the reaction of male-dominated Hollywood to the film version of Margaret Atwood's [THE HANDMAID'S TALE 20:4:16] and their misunderstanding of the story's themes. Equally fascinating to me were two separate articles on the film MILLENNIUM by Dennis Fischer and J.D. MacDonald [20:4:40] which both criticize Cheryl Ladd for not playing the "tough bitch" her role called for.

The use of the word "bitch" to categorize aggressive women has been around longer than the terms "handmaid" or "Martha" but it is just as sexist and degrading, ultimately leading to the same effect, an attempt to strip women of their individuality and respect. The primary question of Atwood's work is not "can it happen here?" but

"how is it happening now?" My thanks to your staff for helping to answer these questions.

Robert G. Fitzgerald  
San Jose, CA 95118

## AND NOW, A WORD FROM THE RIGHT

It amazes me how William Friedkin can claim censorship [THE GUARDIAN 20:4:6] after making a film showing an adolescent girl masturbating with a crucifix. If his use of obscenities in describing the head of the MPAA and the President of the United States is his idea of rational discourse then thank God for the MPAA.

In an issue last year [19:1:12] John Carpenter said, "I think it's a real bad time in America, a real Nazi time," while collecting another couple of million from the system where he can still raise \$10-20 million for a film project after

having ten flops in a row.

By the way, as long as I'm defending the establishment, I would like to know what exactly Margaret Atwood was listening to that caused her to infer that the testimony of Oliver North "pretty much indicated that he wouldn't have minded staging a coup."

Michael Antonucci  
Carmichael, CA 95608

Film convention in London in 1978 was allegedly former Hammer chief Michael Carreras' own copy, but that didn't include the shot either. Still, in a country which seems able to suppress out of existence a reputed British classic like the 1938 TOWER OF FEAR, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised by the mysterious disappearance of shots.

Ramsey Campbell  
Wallasey, England

## CENSORED HAMMER

I was intrigued to read Bill Kelley's reference [Videophile 20:4:53] to the shots apparently missing from the available prints of HORROR OF DRACULA and CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN. Oddly enough, these shots have never been seen in Britain, neither in the versions shown theatrically nor on television. The copy of [HORROR OF] DRACULA shown at a Hammer

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sics that most people have not seen in a long, long time. All this from a man a lot of film fans hate for his colorizing of old movies.

Transferred from mint 35mm prints to video, Turner has given us pristine copies of THE CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF (1961) and THE EVIL OF FRANKENSTEIN (1964), both unedited, and in the latter case, it's the theatrical version, not the truncated special TV version with its additional U.S. footage. And when he telecast both DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS (1965) and FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED (1969), the prints were of the British release versions, not the U.S. And, as a bonus, U.S. fans were finally able to see the rape scene in the latter that Warner Bros snipped from its American release.

Perhaps, some day, Warner Bros and MCA will delve into their vaults and pull out all their Hammers for video release. As for now, one has to keep their eyes open in stores and on TV for the occasional surprise.

Mark Rollie  
New Hope, MN 55428

### CALVIN T. BECK, R.I.P.

I was deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of Calvin T. Beck, founder of *Castle of Frankenstein*, one of the seminal fantasy film magazines of the '60s and early '70s. Beck had been inactive for quite some time due to a serious illness. For me, if *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor Forrest J Ackerman was the benevolent uncle, Beck, in sharp contrast, was the feisty, rambunctious cousin.

In his quest for a more "sophisticated" magazine, Beck was outspoken in his views on censorship, Vietnam, the government, commercial overkill, poverty and the "state of the arts" in his editorials and letter column replies, often to the consternation of those readers who wanted their science fiction/horror straight up and undiluted by the rocks of harsh realities.

To those who have (and had) taken his place in a very difficult field of publishing, Beck's early influence is undeniable. His legacy to those who have carried on the torch he's passed is that all fantasy film enthusiasts, readers and publishers alike, share a common bond despite differing age brackets and points of view. Thanks, Cal.

Jim Singer  
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

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